SEVEN
WISE
MASTERS

From the collection of
J. Payne Collier

Geo. P. Byles.

Imperfect
pp. 32-41 wanting; p. 17-18 torn.
J. Payne Collier's
Copy.

Feb. 1900

See Fry's Bibl. Mag.a 1816 p 164

Mr Baily a Solr. of West Bromwich has a copy of this book in B. L. but wanting the title-page: the date, probably, about 1640. It is of the same size as this copy.

There was an old Play on the last story Alexander & Lodowick See "Ellenslowe's Diary" p 79 &c and an old ballad: see Evans' Coll. edit. 1810 Vol I. p 77.

In this copy there seems an imperfection after p 31

J. Payne Collier

THE HISTORY OF THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS OF ROME.

Containing

Many pleasant and witty NARRATIONS,

Very delightful to read.

LONDON:

Printed and sold by T. SABINE, No. 81, Shoe Lane, and E. Sibley, Bookseller, No. 29, Brick Lane, *Spital-Fields.*

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Abel Smith.

WOODHALL PARK.

TO THE READER.

FOR thy better delight, and more plainly to ſet forth the hiſtory to thy view, I have, to my great coſt, added many pictures, lively expreſſing the moſt material points of mine. If I may receive thy thanks, I think it a ſufficient reward. The hiſtory of itſelf is both ancient and moral, and containeth in it much learning.

When ignorance, having a thick and dull ear, blinded moſt people, men were compelled to draw the rude multitude to attention of good inſtruction by ſuch pleaſing allurement of tales and fables as in this book is ſet down; that as the mind is fed and delighted with the ſweetneſs of fabulous ſtories, the ſoul itſelf, at the end, (by often taſting the ſame nouriſhment) grows quicker ſighted; to behold the hidden and myſtical wiſdom contained under ſuch cloſe riddles: for, in few words, to give you the meaning of this moral, it is thus—the emperor may ſignify the world, who having but one only ſon, (who is Man) him to bring well up is all his care; but Man loſing his own mother, (who is Reaſon or Divine Grace) fall-

ing into the hands of the ſtep-mother, (ſignifying Sin) who is an Empreſs of great bewitching, and one that commands the world: ſhe works by all poſſible means the confuſion of Man, and would prevail againſt his weakneſs, but that a ſtar from heaven, (by which is meant Goodneſs from above) inſtructs Man how to avoid the allurements of Sin, by not opening his mouth to bid her welcome; and the better to prevent her miſchief, he hath Seven Wiſe Maſters, which are the Seven Liberal Sciences, to give him wholſome inſtructions, and by thoſe helps ſave him from mortal danger: ſo that, being thus armed, Man liveth to batter down Sin, (figured in the death of the Empreſs and her minion) and in the end to gain a rich crown of glory and happineſs, ſet ready for all thoſe that in this life labour to attain to heaven by doing well.

This is the explanation of the moral; of which, if thou make right uſe, it will be a rich banquet to thy ſoul. Farewel.

THE

THE HISTORY OF THE Seven WISE MASTERS of ROME.

The Entrance into the Moral, which according to Things of comic Pleasure, properly begins with a Funeral.

SOMETIME in the City of Rome there was a famous Emperor named Pontianus, a man of great wisdom; he took to his wife a king's daughter that was very fair and amiable, to all people gracious, and to her husband right dear: she conceived by him, and was delivered of a son named Diocleſian. The child grew apace, and of all people was beloved; and when he was of the age of seven years, his mother the Empreſs falling sick, and feeling herself that she might not live, sent after her lord the Emperor (being rode forth on progreſs) a meſſenger, that he should return without tarrying, if ever he would see her alive.

And when he was come, ſhe ſaid unto him—O my dear lord, of this ſickneſs I may not

escape, wherefore the natural and tender love and care that is to me, towards you and your son, makes a ſuit to you before my death. He replied—Deſire what you will, I ſhall not deny you any thing. Then, ſaid ſhe, after my death you will take another wife, as is moſt convenient; wherefore, I beſeech you, that ſhe over my ſon have no power, but that he be nouriſhed far from her, and trained up in learning. The Emperor anſwered—My moſt dear wife, your petition in all things ſhall be performed. Then turned the Empreſs and gave up the ghoſt. Many days after, the Emperor bewailed her death, and long after ſhewed his heaviness, and would in no wiſe be joyful.

How

How the Emperor *committed and delivered his Son to Seven Wise Masters to be instructed in Learning.*

UPON a time as the Emperor lay in his bed, he thought himself inwardly of his son, saying in his heart—I have but one only son, which shall be my heir; it is good, while he is young, that he is set to learn cunning and wisdom, by which he may, after my death, govern and rule the empire; intimating thereby, that a worthy Prince taking upon him too great a weight and charge, as the government of a kingdom, ought first to learn to be his own governor, and to master his own affections.—so that, when he was early risen up from his bed, he caused to be called the lords of his council before him, and of them took advice what were best therein to be done: and they answered—Lord, in Rome are Seven Wise Masters, who live in very great fame for their excellency in arts, great counsel, and instructions; let them be sent for, and deliver them your son to be fostered and instructed in learning. The Emperor understanding that, sent his letters made powerful by his own seal, to the Seven Wise Masters, that they should come to him without delay: they anon came before the Emperor, and he demanded of them if they knew wherefore he had sent for them? they answered—The cause is as your will intendeth, we know not; but if it pleaseth you to shew us your mind, we be ready to fulfil it

to the utmoſt of our powers. To whom the Emperor ſaid—I have but one ſon, which I ſhall deliver to you to confirm in all good ways of learning and virtue, ſo that by your doctrine and wiſdom he may more wiſely govern the empire after my deceaſe.

The firſt Maſter, named Pontillas, ſaid—Lord, deliver me your ſon, and I ſhall teach him as much cunning within ſeven years, as I and all my fellows can.

Then ſpake the ſecond Maſter, named Lentullus—Sir, of long time I have ſerved you, and hitherto have had no reward; I demand nothing of you but that you deliver me your ſon to govern, and I ſhall make him as cunning within ſix years as I and all my fellows.

The

The third Maſter, named Craton, ſaid—My lord, many times I have been with you on the ſea, in peril of my life, and have had no manner of reward: if I might, for my recompence, obtain that you would vouchſafe to commit your ſon under my governance, I ſhould inform him as much within five years, if his wit will thereto attain, as I and all my fellows can.

Then ſtood up the fourth Maſter, named Malquidrack, who was right lean of body, and ſaid—My lord, remember I and all my predeceſſors have ſerved emperors, and received no reward, wherefore I aſk no other thing, but that you deliver me your ſon to teach, and I ſhall make him take as much ſcience and wiſdom within four years as I and all my fellows have learned in all our lives.

Then ſpake the fifth Maſter, that was named Joſephus—Lord, I am old, and many times am called to your council, and you know that my counſel hath profited you, and ſo likewiſe may I do hereafter; yet I deſire no more, but that you deliver me your ſon, and I ſhall inſtruct him in as much cunning and ſcience that he within three years ſhall be prompt in wit, as much as I and all my fellows have.

Then came the ſixth Maſter, named Cleophes, who ſaid like to the other, promiſing to inform the child in all their cunning in two years.

The ſeventh Maſter alſo deſired the child,

and promiſed to learn him within one year, the ſciences and wiſdom of them all.

When all this was done, the Emperor ſaid—My truſty friends, I am very much bound to thank you all, and every one of you, for that you have ſo earneſtly deſired to foſter and inſtruct my ſon: if I ſhould now commit him to one and not to another, thereupon would enſue much diſſention among you; therefore, to you all, and every of you, I commit my ſon to be nouriſhed and taught. The Maſters hearing this, expreſſing both their greatneſs of joy, and forwardneſs in will to the Emperor, all with one harmony of conſent received his ſon, and led him towards the Court of Rome. Upon the way, ſpake Craton to his fellows—If we this child ſhould teach within the City of Rome, there is ſo great reſort and concourſe of people, that it would hinder him in learning: I know a fair place, from Rome ſome two miles, right pleaſant and delectable; there let us make a four-ſquare chamber of ſtone, and put him therein, and upon the walls thereof let us paint and write the ſeven liberal arts, ſo that the child all times may ſee and behold his doctrine therein, as well as in his book. This advice pleaſed them all, and was done accordingly in every point; the Maſters diligently, every day, during ſeven years, taught and inſtructed the child, and determined among themſelves, and ſaid—It is good that we examine our diſciple, to ſee at what perfection our pains hath arrived, and what ſtrength and growth

his

his virtue and knowledge is come to: and they all wisely and religiously accorded to that counsel: then said Master Pontillas—How shall we prove him? Craton said—Let every one of us, as he sleepeth, put under every corner of his bed an olive leaf, and then we shall know if he perceived or felt any thing, or not: this done, he awaking, greatly marvelled, and lifted up his eyes towards the roof of the chamber fervently. The Masters seeing that, said, Wherefore lift you up your eyes so sharply? He answered—It is no marvel; for in my sleep I saw the uppermost part of my chamber inclined towards the earth, or else under me it was lifted up. The Masters hearing this, said amongst themselves—If this child live, he shall be a man of great cunning and fame.

How the Emperor *by the Counsel of the great Princes and Lords of his Empire, wedded another Wife.*

THE princes and great lords of the empire, in the mean time, came to the Emperor, and said—My lord, ye have only one son. it is possible he might die, therefore it were profitable that you would wed another wife, that thereby your joys and hopes may be blessed with far more certainty and assured happiness in your race and issue, to the intent that the empire of Rome be not left without an heir. Moreover, you are so mighty, that if it should

happen you to get many children, you may promote and advance them all to great dignities and lordſhips. Whereupon, anſwered the Emperor—It is your counſel that I ſhall take another wife; then ſeek me one that is gracious, a pure virgin, fair and gentle born, and then I ſhall follow your counſel and advice. They went and ſought, and ſearched out many kingdoms and countries; and at the laſt, they found the king's daughter of Caſtile, that was right fair and beautiful, and her they gave the Emperor to wife, who behaved herſelf ſo well, that anon he was ſo greatly taken in her love, that he forgot all the ſorrow of heart he had taken for the death of his firſt wife: and when they had lived long together without any children, and when the Empreſs ſaw that ſhe might not conceive, when ſhe heard the Emperor had a ſon with the Seven Wiſe Maſters, to be foſtered and taught, to the great good and profit of the empire, ſhe thought in herſelf, and wiſhed his death, and from that very hour imagined how ſhe might conſpire his deſtruction. It happened on a night, as the Emperor lay in his bed, he ſaid unto the Empreſs—My moſt dear and beſt beloved wife, I ſhall now open to you the ſecrets of my heart, for under the ſun there is no creature that I love ſo well as you, and therefore truſt in my love.

Then, ſaid the fair Empreſs, if it be ſo as you ſay, I require of you one boon or petition.—Deſire what you will, ſaid the Emperor, and all that in me is poſſible I ſhall fulfil

and

and give it you. Then, ſaid the Empreſs, my dear lord, you know I have no child by you yet conceived, for which I am ſore penſive and heavy; but Fame, that never conceals itſelf long to true joy, hath delivered this happy truth to me, that you have one ſon only, the which is ſent to the Seven Wiſe Maſters to be taught and governed, and him I hold and require for my own ſon; wherefore I beſeech you, ſend for him, that I may ſee him, and have conſolation of his preſence, as though he were mine own. Hereupon, anſwered the Emperor—It is ſixteen years paſt ſince I ſaw him, your will ſhall be fulfilled. Incontinent the Emperor ſent unto the Seven Wiſe Maſters a letter, ſealed with his ſecret ſign, that upon pain of death they ſhould bring his ſon in the feaſt of Pentecoſt following.

How

How the Seven Wiſe Maſters, *after the Sight of the* Emperor's *Letter, would firſt obſerve the Courſe and divine For ſhewing of the Firmament and Planets, whet er it were good to obey his Commandments or not.*

AND when the Maſters by the letter had underſtood the Emperor's will, in the night they went and beheld the ſtars in the firmament, whether it would be expedient to bring the child to the Emperor or not; and they ſaw clearly in the ſtars, that if they ſhould lead the child in that time aſſigned, at the firſt word he ſhould ſpeak he ſhould die an evil death; wherefore they were all very ſorry, and as they beheld another ſtar, they ſaw that if they delivered not the child at the time before ſaid, they ſhould loſe their heads. Said one

one of them—Of two evils the leaſt is beſt; it is better that all we die, than the child ſhould loſe his life; therefore, that we may ſave the child's life, let us go to the Emperor. As they were thus ſorrowful, the child came into his chamber, and ſeeing his Maſters ſo heavy, he demanded the cauſe of their heavineſs: whereunto they anſwered—Sir, we have received your father's letters, that upon pain of death, now this high feaſt of Pentecoſt, we ſhall lead you to your country; whereupon, we have beholden the firmament, wherein we clearly find, that if we (within the time prefixed) preſent you to your father, at the firſt word ye ſhall pronounce out of your mouth, ye ſhall be to the moſt vileſt death condemned. Then ſaid the child—I muſt alſo behold the firmament with the ſtars; and ſo he did, and found clearly in a little ſtar, that if he could abſtain from ſpeaking ſeven days he ſhould preſerve and ſave his life. And after he had ſeen this, called his Maſters and ſhewed them the ſtar, and ſaid—Behold, my dear Maſters, I ſee perfectly in the ſtar, that if I abſtain myſelf ſeven days, I ſhall ſave my life. Ye are now Seven Maſters, the wiſeſt of all the world, it is an eaſy thing for you, every of you for me to anſwer, and with your wiſe anſwer every of you his day, my life may ſave and keep; and in the eighth day I ſhall ſpeak myſelf, and ſave my life, and all you from peril: as the Maſters did behold that certain ſtar, they thought to themſelves, that the child had ſaid right, and Al-

mighty

pen,

mighty God be thanked that the underſtanding of our diſciple exceeded us. The firſt Maſter, Pontillas, ſaid—Lord, I will anſwer on the firſt day, and ſave your life: and the ſecond Maſter ſaid—I ſhall likewiſe on my day anſwer; and ſo conſequently every of them promiſed to anſwer for himſelf his day: and this ſaid, they cloathed the child in purple, leaped on horſeback with a fair company, and haſtened with the child to the Emperor.

How the Emperor *rode to meet his Son coming from Study, with Joy, Solemnity, and Triumph.*

WHEN the Emperor perceived that his ſon was coming on the way, he rode with great joy to meet him, and the Maſters under-

underſtanding the coming of the Emperor, ſaid unto the child—It is beſt that we depart, that in the mean while we may provide how we may ſave your life. The child ſaid—It pleaſeth me well that you do ſo, but have mind of me in my neceſſity: ſo they took leave, and departed towards the city, and the child came after, accompanied moſt honourably. And as he and his father the Emperor met, for joy he took his ſon about the neck and kiſſed him, and ſaid—My dear ſon, now is my joy compleat, I behold in thee the treaſure of my life's comfort. How is it with you? it is long ſince that I ſaw you. He bowed down his head, and anſwered nothing. The father had great wonder why he ſpake not, and thought in himſelf that his Maſters had informed him ſo, that he arriving ſhould not ſpeak. And when they were come into the palace, and were deſcended from their horſes, the father took the ſon by the hand and led him into the hall, and ſet him next him, and beheld him, and ſaid—Tell me now how it is with your Maſters? how [illegible] they inſtructed you th[illegible] many [illegible] ſaw you? But he b[illegible] and ſpake not. T[illegible] ſpeak ye not to me? [illegible] that the Emperor's [illegible] joyous, and ſaid—I [illegible] parelled herſelf wit[illegible] her two of her gen[illegible] the Emperor was [illegible] her down by the c[illegible]

peror—Is this your ſon that hath been nouriſhed with the Seven Wiſe Maſters? and he ſaid—It is my ſon, but he ſpeaketh not. She ſaid—Deliver to me your ſon, and if ever he ſpeak, I ſhall make him. Then ſaid the Emperor—Riſe and go with her. The ſon did reverence to his father, as though he had ſaid—I am ready to accompliſh your will; and ſo he went with her.

How the Empreſs *led* Diocleſian, *the* Emperor's *Son, with her into a Chamber, to make good Cheer with him, the which he withſtood.*

THE Empreſs led him with her into the chamber, and commanded all others to

before her bedſide, and

and ſaid—O my beſt beloved Dioclesian! I have heard much of your perſon and beauty; but now I am glad that I may ſee that which my heart coveteth and loveth; for I have cauſed your father to ſend for you, that I might have ſolace and joy of your perſon: wherefore right heartily I give you knowledge that I for your love unto this day have kept my virginity; ſpeak to me therefore, and let us go to bed together. But he gave her no anſwer. She ſeeing that, ſaid unto him—O good Dioclesian, which hath the half of my ſoul, why ſpeak ye not to me? or at leaſt ſhew me ſome token of thy love. What ſhall I do? Speak to me, I am ready to perform your will. And when ſhe had thus ſaid, ſhe embraced him, and would have kiſſed his mouth, but he turned his viſage from her, and in no wiſe would conſent. Then ſhe ſaid again—O ſon, wherefore do you thus with me? Let us ſleep together, and then ſhall ye perceive that, for your love, I have kept my virginity. But he turned his viſage again from her; ſhe ſeeing that of her he was aſhamed, ſhewing unto him her naked body and breaſts, ſaying—Behold, my ſon, what body I have; it is at your will, a ſervant at your pleaſure: give me your conſent, or it ſhall be hard for me to depart hence in my right mind. He ſhewed her no manner of love, but as much as he could withdrew himſelf from her. When ſhe ſaw that, ſhe ſaid—O my beſt ſon, if it pleaſe you not to conſent unto me (yet ſpeak) perhaps for ſome reaſonable cauſe! Lo, here is

pen,

pen, ink, and paper, then write your will, whether I may at any time hereafter truſt in your love or not. The child wrote as followeth—O lady, God forbid that I ſhould defile my father's orchard! for I wot not what fruit I ſhould have of it. I know well that I ſhould ſin greatly in the ſight of God, and alſo run in the malediction of my father; and therefore from henceforth I pray you provoke me no more thereto.

When ſhe had ſeen and read the writing, ſhe tore it with her teeth, and rent her cloaths to her navel, and caſt from her all the ornaments of her head, and cried with a loud voice—Come hither, my lords, and help me, leſt this rude and evil body ſhame and raviſh me.

How the Empreſs *complained to the* Emperor *of the ſhame done unto her by his Son.*

THE Emperor being in the hall, and hearing the cry of the Empreſs, haſtily run toward her chamber, with many of his knights and ſervants following him, to know the matter. Then began the Empreſs to cry and ſpeak to the Emperor in this wiſe—O my lord, have pity on me! behold this young man is not your ſon, but the fouleſt for ribaldry and actions of luxury that ever ſin and heat put ſtrength into; for as you know, I led him into the chamber, and would have exhorted and

cauſed

caufed him to have fpoken: I have done as much therefore as I can or may; and whilft I moved him to have fpoken, he hath endeavoured himfelf with me to have finned, and becaufe I would not confent, but withftood as much as I might to flie the fame, he hath made my vifage all bloody, and torn my vefture and ornaments off my head, as you may fee; and if you had not foon come unto my calling, he had ended in me his moft foul and wicked appetite. When the Emperor faw and heard this, (filled with great malice and madnefs) he commands his fervant to lead him to the gallows and hang him. When the lords heard thereof, they faid—Lord, you have but this only fon, it is not good that ye thus flightly put him to death; the law is ordained for tranfgreffors; and if he muft die, let him by the law die, left it be faid—that the Emperor in his wrath, without law or juftice, had put his only fon to death. As the Emperor heard this, he commanded him to be put in prifon till judgment was given againft him. When the Empref underftood that the child was not put to death, fhe wept bitterly, and would take no reft. When night came, the Emperor entered into his chamber to go to bed, and found his wife forrowing, to whom he faid—O my dear lady, for what caufe are ye forrowful? She anfwered—Know ye not that your accurfed fon hath done me fo much fhame and difhonoured you, that you commanded him to be hanged, and yet he liveth, and your

word

word is not performed, nor my ſhame revenged? To-morrow, ſaid the Emperor, he ſhall die by the law. Then ſaid ſhe—Shall he ſo long live? Then might it happen to you as it did to a burgeſs of Rome, of whom an example is mentioned. The Emperor ſaid—I pray you ſhew me this example. That ſhall I do gladly, ſays the Empreſs.

The firſt Example of the Empreſs.

IN the City of Rome was a burgeſs, which had a fair garden, wherein he had a noble tree, the which every year brought forth fruit of good virtue; for whoſoever eat thereof that were ſick of any manner of ſickneſs, or leproſy, he ſhould ſoon be whole, and receive ſight.

It happened on a day, as the burgeſs went into the garden to viſit the tree, he eſpied under the tree a fair young imp, and called to him the gardener, and ſaid—My friend, of this young imp I give thee charge, for I truſt of that to plant a better tree than this is. The gardener ſaid—I ſhall it gladly do. Another time the burgeſs came again into the garden to viſit the young plant, and it appeared unto him that it grew not ſo much as it ſhould do; and he ſaid to the gardener—How may this be? and he ſaid—It is no wonder, for this great tree hath ſo great arms and branches, that the air may not come to the root of the young tree. Then ſaid the burgeſs, Cut and hew off the

the arms and the boughs, that the air may come thereto. The gardener did as he commanded. The burgeſs came again another time to ſee the young plant, and thought that it grew never the better; and ſaid to the gardener—What is it that letteth not this plant to grow now? and he ſaid—I ſuppoſe the height of the old tree letteth the ſun, that the rain may not come thereto, and therefore it cannot grow. Then ſaid the maſter unto him, Hew down that tree to the ground, for I hope of this plant to have a better than ever this was. The gardener hearing his maſter, hewed down the tree, and as ſoon as this was done, the young plant periſhed, and came to nought; wherefore there came great harm, for when the poor ſick people perceived that the tree was deſtroyed, they curſed all them that were counſellors and helpers thereto, by the which they were oftentimes healed and cured of their infirmities. Then, ſaid the Empreſs to her lord, Underſtand ye what I have ſaid? He anſwered—Yea, right well. Then ſaid ſhe, I will declare the meaning of that I have ſaid.

The Declaration of the Example.

THIS tree, my lord, betokeneth your moſt noble perſon, how that with your counſel and help many poor and ſick folks are greatly comforted; and the young imp which is grown under the great tree, is your accurſed ſon,

ſon, that now by cunning beginneth to grow, and ſtudieth firſt how he might cut off the arms and boughs of your might, and how to win him the land and favour of the people; yea, and more unnaturally, imagineth to deſtroy your perſon, that he may himſelf reign; but what ſhall then enſue thereof? All poor and feeble people ſhall curſe them who might have deſtroyed your ſon, and have not yet done it: therefore, I counſel you, while you are in power, that you deſtroy him, leſt the curſe of the people fall upon you. Then ſaid the Emperor, ye have given me good counſel, to-morrow I ſhall condemn him to the vileſt death that can be thought upon. When the day was, the Emperor went and ſat in judgment, and commanded his ſervants to lead his ſon to be hanged, with trumpets ſounding in token of death. As the Emperor's ſon was led through the city, the common people began to weep and cry—Alas, the only ſon of the Emperor is led towards his death! And therewithal came Pantillas, the firſt Maſter, riding upon a horſe. When the child ſaw him, he bowed his head, as though he ſaid—Mind me when you come before my father, ſee how I am led toward the gallows. Then the Maſter ſaid to the ſervants—Make no haſte, for I hope, by the grace of God, this day to deliver him from death. Then ſaid all the people—O good Maſter, haſte you to the palace, and leave your diſciple. He ſmote his horſe with his ſpurs, till he came to the palace;

lace, and kneeled to the Emperor, and did him reverence. To whom the Emperor ſaid—It ſhall never be to thee good: who anſwered—I have deſerved a better reward. The Emperor ſaid—Thou lieſt, for I delivered my ſon to thee well mannered, and now he is brought home dumb, and hath ſought to work his will, to the ſhame of my virtuous Empreſs, and the diſhonour of his father's bed for ever; therefore this day ſhall he die, and ye ſhall die a ſhameful death. Then ſaid the Maſter—Lord, foraſmuch as your ſon ſpeaketh not, the cauſe whereof God knoweth, and without cauſe it is not, as you ſhall underſtand; and whereas you ſay, that he would have committed the ſin of enforcement on your Empreſs, I ſhall ſay to you of a truth, he hath been in our company to the ſpace of ſixteen years, and we never could perceive ſuch abuſe by him; therefore, my dear lord, I ſhall ſhew you one thing, that if you put your ſon to death for the words of your wife, it ſhall happen to you worſe than to a knight that killed his beſt grey-hound (through the words of his wife) which ſaved his ſon from death. Then ſaid the Emperor to the Maſter—Tell me that example: the Maſter ſaid—Lord, that ſhall I not do, for before I ſhall end your ſon might be dead, and then without hope ſhall I rehearſe it; but if it pleaſe you this noble example to hear, call again your ſon till to-morrow; and as you think by reaſon, then do with him your pleaſure. As the Emperor heard that, anon he

willed the child to be called again; and in the mean time he ſent him to priſon, while the Maſter finiſhed his tale; and then began in the following manner.

The firſt Example of the Firſt Maſter.

THERE was a valiant knight had only one ſon as you have, which he loved ſo much that he ordained for his keepers three nouriſhers; the firſt ſhould give him ſuck, and feed him; the ſecond waſh him, and keep him clean; and the third ſhould bring to his ſleep and reſt. The knight had alſo a grey-hound and a faulcon, which he alſo loved right well. The grey-hound was ſo good that he never ran at any game but he took it, and held it till his maſter came. And if his maſter was diſpoſed to go to any battle, if he could not ſpeed therein, anon as he ſhould mount his horſe, the grey-hound would take his horſe-tail in his mouth, and draw backward, and cry and howl marvellouſly loud. By theſe ſigns, and the obſervations thereof, the kight did always underſtand that his journey ſhould have very ill ſucceſs. The faulcon was ſo gentle and hardy, that he was never caſt off to his prey, but he took it.

The ſame knight had great pleaſure in juſting and tourney, ſo that upon a time, under his caſtle, he proclaimed a tournament, to the which came many great lords and knights.

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The knight entered into the tourney, and his lady went with her maidens to ſee it, and as they went out, after went the nouriſhers, and left the child lying in the cradle in the hall, where the grey-hound lay near the wall, and the hawk or faulcon ſtanding upon a perch. In this hall there was a ſerpent lurking, to all them of the caſtle unknown, which when he perceived they were all abſent, he put his head out of his hole; and when he ſaw none but the child in the cradle, he went out of his hole towards the cradle, to have ſlain the child.

The noble faulcon perceiving that, and beholding the grey-hound that was ſleeping made ſuch ruffling with her wings, that the grey-hound awaked and roſe up; and when he ſaw the ſerpent near the child, anon againſt him he leaped, and they both fought ſo long that the ſerpent had grievouſly wounded the grey-hound that he bled ſo ſore, that the earth about the cradle was bloody. The grey-hound, when he felt himſelf grievouſly wounded, ſtarts fiercely upon the ſerpent, and fought ſo ſore and eagerly, that betwixt them the cradle was overtoſt, with the child, the bottom upward, and the cradle having four pummels which it fell upon, they ſaved the child from having any hurt. What can be more expreſt to make good the wonder in this preſervation of the child? With great pain the grey-hound ſlew the ſerpent, laid him down again in his place, and licked his wounds. Anon after, as the juſts and tourney was done, the nouriſh-

ers came firſt into the caſtle, and ſaw the cradle turned the upſide down upon the earth, compaſſed round about with blood, and the grey-hound alſo bloody, and ſaid amongſt themſelves, that the grey-hound had ſlain the child, and were not ſo wiſe to turn up the cradle again with the child, to ſee what was befallen; and ſaid—Let us run away, leſt that our maſter ſhould lay the blame upon us and ſlay us. Running away, they met the knight's wife, and ſhe ſaid unto them——Wherefore make ye this ſorrow? and whither will you run? Then they ſaid—O lady, woe be to us! and to you? Why, ſaid ſhe, what is happened ſhew me? The grey-hound, they ſaid, that our lord and maſter loved ſo well, hath devoured and ſlain your ſon, and lieth by the wall full of blood. As the lady heard this, ſhe preſently fell to the earth, and began to weep piteouſly, and ſaid—Alas, O my dear ſon! are ye thus ſlain? What ſhall I now do, that I have mine only ſon thus loſt? Herewithal, came in the knight from the tourney, beholding his lady crying, he demanded wherefore ſhe made ſo great lamentation? She anſwered, O my lord, the grey-hound you loved ſo much hath ſlain your only ſon, and lieth by the wall ſatiated with the blood of the child. The knight, exceeding angry, went into the hall, the grey-hound aroſe to meet him, and did fawn upon him as he was wont. But the knight drew out his ſword, and with one ſtroke ſmote off the grey-hound's head. Then he

went

went to the cradle where the child lay, and found his ſon whole, and by the child the ſerpent lay ſlain, and by divers ſigns perceived the grey-hound had killed the ſerpent for the defence of the child. Then with great ſorrow he tore his hair, and ſaid—Woe is me, that for the words of my wife I have ſlain my beſt grey-hound, which hath ſaved my child's life, and ſlain the ſerpent! therefore I will put myſelf to pennance. And ſo he brake his ſword in three pieces, and went toward the Holy Land, and abode there all the days of his life. Then ſaid the Maſter to the Emperor—Lord, underſtand ye what I have ſaid? and he anſwered—Right well. The Maſter ſaid—If you put your ſon to death for the words of your wife, it ſhall happen to you worſe than it did to the knight for his grey-hound. The Emperor ſaid—You have ſhewn me a fair example; without doubt, this day my ſon ſhall not die. Then ſaid the Maſter—If you do ſo you do wiſely; and I thank you that you have ſpared him this day for my ſake.

The ſecond Complaint of the Empreſs; *a Sorrow mingled with much Cunning and Falſhood.*

WHEN the Empreſs heard the child was not yet dead, ſhe began to weep bitterly, and ſat her down on the earth in aſhes, and would not lift up her head. When the

Emperor heard that, he entered the chamber, and ſaid unto her—O good wife, wherefore make you all this ſorrow, and trouble yourſelf ſo much? She ſaid—Aſk ye that of me? Know ye not what ſhame I have ſuffered of your unhappy ſon? and ye have promiſed me that you would ſee juſtice to be thereupon executed on him, and yet he liveth! Of a truth it will happen to you as to a ſhepherd and a boar. The Emperor ſaid—I pray you ſhew me that example for my learning. She ſaid—Yeſterday I ſhewed you one, and ſaw no good effect that came thereof: to what end ſhall I now do the like? Nevertheleſs, I ſhall declare this noble example unto you, as hereafter you ſhall hear.

The ſecond Example of the Empreſs.

THERE was ſometime an Emperor which had a great foreſt, wherein was a wild boar ſo cruel and fierce that he devoured men going through the foreſt; the Emperor therefore, being right heavy, proclaimed through his dominions—That whoſoever could ſlay the boar, ſhould have his only daughter to his wife and the empire after his death. As this was in all places proclaimed, there was not one man found that durſt give the adventure: but there was a ſhepherd, who thought in himſelf, Might I the boar overcome and ſlay, I ſhould not only advance myſelf, but alſo my generation

tion and kindred. So he took his ſhepherd's ſtaff in his hand, went to the foreſt, and as the boar had of him a ſight, he drew towards the herdſman; but he, for fear, climbed into a tree, and then the boar began to bite and gnaw the tree, ſo that the herd thought ſhortly he would have overthrew it. This tree was loaden with plenty of fruit, and the herd gathered thereof, and caſt them to the boar, inſomuch that when he was filled therewith, he laid him down to ſleep, which when the herd perceived, he by little and little deſcended the tree, and with the one hand clawed the boar, and with the other held him about the tree, and ſeeing the boar ſlept very ſoundly, drawing out his knife, ſmote the boar to the heart and killed him, and ſhortly after wedded the Emperor's daughter, and after the death of her father he was made Emperor. Then, ſaid ſhe, my lord, wot ye not what I have ſaid? He ſaid—Right well. Then, ſaid ſhe, this mighty boar betokeneth your moſt noble perſon, againſt whom may no man withſtand, neither by wiſdom nor ſtrength: The ſhepherd with his ſtaff, to the perſon of your ungracious ſon, who with his ſtaff of cunning beginneth to play with you, as the herdſman clawed the boar, made him ſleep, and after killed him. In the ſame manner the Maſters of your ſon, by thoſe falſe fables and narrations cloy you, and gloſe with you, until your ſon ſlay you, that he may reign. Then ſaid the Emperor—God forbid they ſhould do to me as he did to

the wild boar: and he ſaid unto her—This day my ſon ſhall die. And ſhe anſwered—If you do ſo, then do ye wiſely. Then the Emperor, the ſecond time ſitting in judgment, commanded to lead him to the place of execution, appointed for that purpoſe. Whilſt he was going, the ſecond Maſter ſaid—O my lord and Emperor, if you ſhould ſlay your ſon for the words of your wife, it ſhall happen worſe to you than it did to a certain knight, which for the words of his wife was unjuſtly put upon the pillory. The Emperor ſaid—O good maſter, tell me how that happened. And he ſaid, My lord, I ſhall not ſay it, unleſs you will call your only ſon from the death until the example be told; which if it turn not you from your purpoſe, then your will be fulfilled. Then the Emperor commanded the child ſhould be called again; and after this manner following, the ſecond Maſter began to tell.

The Example of the Second Maſter.

IN a city was an ancient knight, which wedded a young wife, and fair, as you have done, whom he loved above all earthly things. The knight was a very circumſpect and careful huſband, inſomuch that every night he locked the door with his own hands, and laid the keys under his bed's head. In that city was a law or cuſtom, that at a certain hour in the night a bell was uſed to be rung, that after the ringing of

the ſon anſwered—That counſel cannot be amended; for it is better of the Emperor's gold to take, to help us, than to ſell our heritage.

So they aroſe in the night, and went to the tower, and with inſtruments made a hole thro' the wall, and took as much gold as they could both carry away at that time, and the knight paid his debts, and haunted again juſts as he did before, until all was conſumed. In the mean while, the keeper of the treaſure went into the tower; and when he ſaw the treaſure ſtolen, and a great hole made through the wall, he began to wax ſore afraid, and went unto the Emperor, and ſhewed what had befel. To whom the Emperor ſaid, all angry—What needs thou to ſhew me that? have I not delivered to thee my treaſure? therefore of thee I will aſk it. Anon, as the keeper heard that, he went to the tower again, and ſet before the hole a great veſſel full of pitch melted, with other gins of ſubtlety, that no man might come in at the hole, but he muſt needs fall into that veſſel; and if he had therein fell, he could no more come out of it. Not long after, the knight had all the gold conſumed and ſpent, and went again with his ſon to ſteal more gold; and as the father went in firſt, anon he was fallen into the veſſel full of pitch to the neck: and when he ſaw he was taken, and could not get out, he ſaid to his ſon—Follow me not, for if thou doſt, thou canſt not eſcape by any means. Then ſaid the ſon—

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God defend that I ſhould not help you! for if you are found we are all dead; and if you may not be holpen by me, I ſhall ſeek counſel how you may be delivered. The father ſaid—There is no other counſel but with thy ſword ſmite off my head, and as my body is found without an head, no man ſhall know me: and ſo thou and my daughters may eſcape this worldly ſhame and death. The ſon ſaid, Father, ye have given the beſt counſel; for if it were ſo, that any man might perceive any knowledge of you, none of us all ſhall eſcape death; and it is expedient that your head be ſmitten off. Anon he drew out his ſword, and ſmote off his father's head, and caſt it into a pit, and then went and ſhewed unto his ſiſters all the matter; who many days after privily bewailed the death of their father. After this, the keeper of the treaſury came into the tower, and found a body without a head; whereat he wondered ſore, and ſhewed it unto the Emperor: to whom he ſaid, Bind the body to the tail of an horſe, and ſo draw him through all the ſtreets of the city, and diligently take good heed if ye hear any cry or weeping, wherefoever you do hear that, he was lord of the houſe, take all them and the body, and draw them to the gallows and hang them. The which the Emperor's ſervants fulfilled according to his commandment. And as they came againſt the houſe of the dead knight, the daughters ſeeing the body of their dead father, made a marvellous great ſhriek, and wept piteouſly.

ouſly. And as their brother heard that, he wounded himſelf with a knife, ſo that great plenty of blood came out of his wound. The officers, when they heard the cry, entered the houſe, and demanded the cauſe of their clamour. Then anſwered the ſon--They lament becauſe I am thus wounded; for when my ſiſters ſaw the blood ſo abundantly go out, as you ſee, they began to weep and cry; and when the officers ſaw the wound, they believed his words, and ſo went and hanged the knight's body upon the gallows, where he hung a long time, and his ſon would neither take his body down from the gallows, nor yet bury his head. The Empreſs ſaid--Underſtand ye what I have ſaid? The Emperor anſwered--Right well.

The Declaration of the Example.

THEN ſpake the Empreſs thus--My lord, I fear it will ſo chance to you and to your ſon: the knight for the love of his ſon was made poor, and firſt he committed theft and brake the tower; ſecondly, cauſed himſelf to be beheaded, that his children ſhould have no ſhame. After, the ſon caſt his head into a dike, and buried it not, neither in the church nor in the church-yard, and his body he ſuffered to hang ſtill on the gallows; if he could not have taken it down in the day, he might well have done it in the night. In this man-

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ner ye labour night and day, that ye may promote your ſon to honour and riches, but without doubt he laboureth for your deſtruction, that he may reign after you in your empire. Therefore I adviſe you ſpeedily to take away his life, who living, would ſuddenly prove the deſtruction of yours. The Emperor ſaid—You have ſhewed me a good example. The knight's ſon, when he had ſmitten off his father's head, would not bury it; without doubt my ſon ſhall not do ſo to me. Then anon he commanded his officers that they ſhould lead him to the gallows, and they all obeyed his commandment haſtily. As they led him thro' the ſtreets, the people made a great noiſe and lamentation, crying, Alas, alas! the only ſon of the Emperor is led again toward the gallows: and as they led him, the third Maſter, named Craton, came riding upon an horſe, and as the child ſaw him, he bowed down his head to him, and as though he had ſaid, Have mind upon me. The people cried, ſaying—O good Maſter, make haſte and ſave your diſciple! So he ſmote his horſe with his ſpurs, and haſted to the palace. And when he came before the Emperor, he honourably ſaluted him, who ſaid—Thy coming hither ſhall nothing avail thee, for I think it long until I be avenged on thee. The Maſter replied—I hoped at my coming to have been welcome, and to have had a better reward, and not ſo to be rebuked. The Emperor ſaid—As ye have deſerved, ſo ſhall it be to you. To whom he

ſaid,

ſaid, My lord, what have I deſerved? The Emperor ſaid, Ye right well deſerve death; for I delivered you my ſon well ſpeaking, and well mannered, to be informed and taught, and ye have delivered him again unto me dumb and a ribauld: to which the Maſter anſwered—— In that you ſay he is dumb, that I commit to God; for he maketh the dumb to ſpeak, and the deaf to hear: but in that you ſay he would have enforced your wife, that ſhould I gladly know, if any creature hath ſeen that; for there is no malice above the malice of a woman, and that I ſhall prove by a good example, that a woman is full of falſhood and unknown deceit; and if you put to death your ſon for the words of your wife, it ſhall happen unto you as it did to a nobleman and his wife, and his pye, which he loved marvelloufly.—— To whom the Emperor ſaid, I pray you tell me how that women are full of malice and leaſings? who ſaid—I ſhall not ſhew it; but if you will firſt call again your ſon from death then at your pleaſure I ſhall ſhew the example. Then the Emperor made his ſon to be called again, and put in priſon; and the Maſter began to tell the example in the manner following.

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The Example of the Third Master.

THERE was in a city a rich burgess that had a pye, which he loved so well, that every day he taught her to speak Latin and Hebrew; and when he had learned her perfectly to speak these two languages, all that she saw and heard she shewed and told her master.

This young man had a fair young wife, as ye have, the which he loved full well; but she on the contrary loved him not, because he was not of that lascivious performance to answer her lusts according to her desires; therefore, she had another young man that she loved above her husband, and always as her husband was out of town, about his merchandize and other business, she sent for her best beloved, that they might make good cheer together: the pye, as she espied that, told it to her master at his coming home, in such a manner, as the noise ran all over the city of her adultery; wherefore her husband many times brawled and chid with her. She answered him, Ye believe your cursed pye, which as long as she liveth, will always make betwixt us variance and discord. And he said, The pye cannot lye, for what she seeth and heareth that she telleth me, and therefore I believe her more than you. It fortuned that this man went into a far country about his merchandize, and as soon as he was gone, his wife sent for her friend and love, to solace and make good cheer with him; but he durst

durſt not come by day-light, but abode until the evening, leſt he ſhould be ſeen of the people; and when the night was come, he knocked at the gate, and ſhe was ready and opened it. He ſaid, I fear that the curſed pye ſhall accuſe me; for by her is come great ſlander upon us through all the city. Enter in, ſhe ſaid, boldly, and fear not. As they ſhould paſs through the hall where the pye was in her cage, ſhe heard him ſay theſe words, O my moſt beloved! I fear me greatly leſt that the pye ſhould betray us; and as the wife heard that, ſhe ſaid, Be ſtill, fool; it is dark, ſhe may not ſee you. Then the pye hearing that, ſaid, If I ſee thee not, I hear thy voice, and thou doeſt wrong to my maſter, for thou ſleepeſt with my miſtreſs, and when my maſter cometh, I ſhall tell him. The young man hearing that, ſaid, Told I not you that the pye would diſcover us? And the wife ſaid, Fear not, for this night we will be avenged on the pye, and ſo they entered into the chamber, and ſlept together that night. About midnight the wife aroſe, and called her maid, and ſaid, Fetch me a ladder, and ſet it up to the roof of the houſe, that I may avenge me on the pye. The maid did ſo, and they went both up, and made a hole through the covering of the houſe right over the pye, and there caſt through ſand, clay, ſtones, and water, upon the pye, inſomuch that the poor pye was almoſt dead. And on the morrow the young man went out early at the back door. When

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the good man was come home, as his cuſtom was, he went and viſited the pye, and ſaid to her, O pye, my beloved bird, tell me how thou haſt fared the while I have been out? ſhe ſaid, Maſter, I will tell you tidings that I have heard: your wife, as ſoon as you were gone, by the night-time ſhe let a man come in; and as ſoon as I heard that, I told him that I ſhould ſhew it you at your coming home; yet ſhe led him into her chamber, and ſlept with him all night: you aſk me alſo how I have done in your abſence; and I ſay to you of a truth, that I was never ſo nigh my death, as I was that ſame night, with ſnow, hail, and rain, that fell upon me ſo long together, that I was almoſt left for dead. The wife, when ſhe heard that, ſaid to her huſband, Sir, you believe your pye, now you may hear what ſhe ſayeth, ſhe complaineth, that in the ſame night there fell ſo much ſnow, hail, and rain, upon her, that ſhe was almoſt dead; and yet there was none of them that ſame night, for there was not in the year a clearer and fairer night than it was; and therefore from henceforth believe her not. Then went the good man to his neighbours, and aſked of them, if in that night were any tempeſt or rain? They anſwered, that ſome of them walked all night, and in all that year there was not ſeen a fairer night. Then went he to his houſe, and ſaid to his wife, I have found you in a truth, for the night was very fair and clear, as I underſtand of your neighbours. You may now

know

know of a truth, ſaid ſhe, that the pye is a liar; with her leaſings ſhe hath ſown much diſcord betwixt us. Moreover, I am defamed through the city by her falſe leaſings. Then the burgeſs went unto the pye, and ſaid—Wherefore haſt thou made lies betwixt me and my wife? Is this the thanks I have for the meat that I was wont to give the with mine own hands every day? And thou haſt thereby brought my wife into great diſgrace thro' all the city. The pye anſwered, God knoweth that I cannot lye; for that which I ſaw and have heard I ſhewed you. Then ſaid he, thou lieſt; thou haſt ſaid unto me, that in the ſame night was hail, ſnow, and rain; that thou hadſt near hand loſt thy life, which is falſe; and therefore from henceforth thou ſhalt make no more leaſings, nor diſcord, betwixt me and my wife; and ſo took the pye and brake her neck.

When as the wife ſaw that, ſhe was glad, and ſaid—Now thou haſt done well; now may we all our days live in reſt and peace. And when he had ſlain the pye, he looked up, and ſaw in the top of his houſe, a ladder, and a veſſel with water, ſand and ſtones: and when he beheld that, he perceived the falſhood of his wife, and cried with a loud voice, Woe to me! that for my wife's words I have ſlain my pye, and alſo my ſolace and joy is loſt, the which in all things ſaid to me truth! And as he had thus done, anon, for ſorrow, he left his merchandize, and all his houſe, and went to-

wards the Holy Land, and never returned home again unto his wife. Then the Maſter ſaid unto the Emperor—Sir, have ye underſtood what I have ſaid? He anſwered—Right well. The Maſter ſaid—Was not this a curſed wife, that ſo by her falſhood, deceit, and cunning, cauſed the pye to be ſlain? The Emperor ſaid—In troth ſhe was full of falſeneſs: it pitieth me greatly to think upon the pye, which for her true ſaying loſt her life. Verily I ſay unto you, that you have told me a very fair example, therefore this day my ſon ſhall not die. Then ſaid the Maſter, Sir, you do wiſely; and I thank you that you have ſpared your ſon this day for my ſake, and ſo to God I commend you.

The fourth Complaint of the Empreſs.

WHEN the Empreſs heard that the child was not dead, ſhe made great noiſe, and crying in ſuch wiſe, that ſhe was heard through the palace, and ſaid—Woe unto me that ever I was made Empreſs! Would to God I had died when I was firſt brought into theſe parts! When the Emperor heard that cry that ſhe made, he entered into the chamber, and comforted her as much as he could, and demanded the cauſe of her lamentation. Who ſaid—O mine own lord! have you no wonder, though that I be in this ſorrow and agony? for

I am

I am your wife and in your company, by your ſon I am aſhamed: ye ſaw lately the bloody marks of his enforcement upon my tender fleſh, and you have promiſed me, that he therefore ſhould be hanged, and yet he liveth: wherefore ſhould I not be ſorry? The Emperor anſwered—Be content, and I ſhall do juſtice upon my ſon to-morrow. I forbore him yeſterday, at the moving of one of his Maſters by an example. Then, ſaid ſhe, Have you forbid to do juſtice for one word? were it ſo, yet for a word ye ſhould not let to do juſtice: and ye ſay, for the example of one Maſter ye have let it. I fear me it ſhall happen to you and your Maſters, as on a time it ſo tuned unto an Emperor with his Seven Wiſe Maſters. The Emperor ſaid—I pray you tell me that example. She ſaid—To what intent ſhould I labour in vain? for yeſterday I ſhewed you a good example, and it availed not: and whatſoever I ſhewed you for honour and profit, that the Maſters of your ſon turn to your deſtruction; as in the preſent example I ſhall clearly ſhew unto you. To whom the Emperor ſaid, O my beſt beloved lady, ſhew me that example, by the ſame I may beware, for though in my clemency I gave one day's benefit of life to my ſon, I ſhall not therefore give him his life; for what's deferred is not forgotten. She ſaid—Gladly ſhall I ſhew it to your profit, and began to tell as followeth.

The fourth Example of the Empreſs.

SOMETIMES there was in the city of Rome Seven Wiſe Maſters, by whom the empire was governed; and the Emperor, that then was, did never attempt any thing without the counſel of his Maſters: whereupon, they perceiving that the Emperor was ſo affected to them, that without them he would not ordain, or do any thing, deviſed by their acts and cunning, that the Emperor ſhould clearly ſee as long as he was in the palace, but ſo ſoon as he was out, he ſhould become blind; and ſo did they, that they might the more freely have the healing themſelves of all things that appertained to the Emperor; by which they won great profit and lucre of goods: and after they had wrought the experiment, they could never change it, nor undo it afterwards; but the Emperor abode ſtill blind many years: and the Seven Maſters made and proclaimed throughout the empire, that if any man had dreamed a dream, he ſhould come unto them with a florent of gold or ſilver, and they will expound the interpretation of his dream; whereby, and by other unjuſt means, they obtained much more ſubſtance and money of the people than the Emperor did. So, upon a time, when he ſat at the table with his Empreſs, he began to ſigh and ſorrow in himſelf, and when ſhe perceived that, ſhe enquired diligently of him the cauſe. The Emperor ſaid—Should it not be heavy

heavy and ſorrowful unto me, that I ſo long have been blind, and cannot ſee out of my palace, and yet find no remedy? To whom ſpake the Empreſs, and ſaid—Lord, hear my counſel, and it ſhall never repent you, if you did thereafter. In your court you have Seven Wiſe Maſters, by whom ye and all the empire are governed; if you mark, ye ſhall find they are the cauſe of your blindneſs; and if it be ſo, they are worthy to die a moſt ſhameful death: therefore heed my advice; firſt ſend for them, and ſhew to them your infirmity, and threaten them on their lives, that they ſhould find ſome ſpeedy remedy to help you of your ſickneſs and blindneſs. This counſel pleaſed the Emperor well; and anon he ſent for the Maſters, and when they were come, the Emperor ſhewed unto them his infirmity and blindneſs, and charged them on pain of death that they ſhould preſently ſeek ſome remedy to eaſe him thereof. Then anſwered they, Ye deſire of us a thing that is difficult to be done thus ſhortly, but give us reſpite for two days, and we will give you your full anſwer. The Emperor was therewithal well contented: then the Seven Wiſe Maſters went unto counſel how they might reſtore him to his ſight again, and in no wiſe could they find the means how to put away the blindneſs from the Emperor; wherefore they were all right ſorrowful, and ſaid among themſelves—Without we find remedy, we are all but dead men. So they throughout all the empire ſought if they could find

any remedy or counſel therefore. It happened upon a time, going through the city, in the midſt thereof they found children playing, and after them came a man with a talent or florent of gold, and ſaid to them—Good Maſters, this night have I dreamed a dream, the interpretation whereof I would fain know, wherefore I pray you ſhew me what it ſignifieth, and take the gold to you. That heard one of the children that played amongſt the others, who ſaid unto him, Give me the gold, and I will expound you the dream. The man ſaid, I dreamed this night, that in the midſt of mine orchard was a great ſpring of water, whereof came many ſmall ſprings, that all my orchard was full, and overflown with water. The child ſaid, Take a ſpade, and dig in the ſame place where you thought that the water ſprung out, and there ſhall you find a hoard of gold, ſo great, that you and your children, and lineage, ſhall be for ever rich. The man did as the child had ſhewed to him, and found the treaſure: then went the man to the child, and meeted him a pound weight of the gold that he had found, for the interpretation of the dream, but he would receive none, but committed him to the prayers of the man. The Seven Wiſe Maſters, when they heard the child had ſo wiſely expounded the dream, they ſaid to him, Good child, what is your name? He anſwered I am called Merlin: then ſaid the Maſters, We ſee ſurely great wiſdom in you: we ſhall ſhew you a great matter, of which we would

gladly

gladly find a remedy. The child ſaid—Shew me your matter. And they ſaid—The Emperor of Rome, as long as he is in the palace, hath his ſight very clear without any impediment; but as ſoon as he is gone out of the palace he cannot ſee. Now if you can find the cauſe thereof, and give preſent remedy, whereby he may be eaſed and have his ſight, ye ſhall have a great reward and honour of the Emperor. Then anſwered the child, I know as well the cauſe of his blindneſs, as the remedy. Then ſaid all unto him—Come with us unto the Emperor, and you ſhall be rewarded ſo largely, that ye ſhall be pleaſed. To whom the child ſaid—I am ready to go with you: and when they came with the child before the Emperor, they ſaid unto him—Lord, lo here is the child we have brought which ſhall fulfil your deſire, touching the cauſe of your blindneſs, and the recovery of your ſight. The Emperor ſaid—Good Maſters, will you take it upon you, that the child ſhall perform it? They all ſaid—Yea, for we are expert in his wiſdom: the Emperor turned himſelf towards the child, and ſaid—Will you undertake to tell me the cauſe of my blindneſs, and the remedy? The child anſwered—My lord, the Emperor, lead me into your bed chamber, and there I will ſhew you what is to be done: and as he was therein brought, he ſaid to his ſervants—Take the cloaths from off the bed, and all the apparel, and you ſhall ſee wonders; that done, they ſaw a well ſmoaking, that had

ſeven ſprings and floods, which when the Emperor ſaw, he marvelled greatly. The child ſaid—Ye ſee this well, without it be quenched, ye ſhall never have your ſight: the Emperor ſaid—How may that be? The child ſaid, But one way. The Emperor ſaid—Shew us the means, and if it be poſſible it ſhall be done that I may recover my ſight as well without as within: to whom the child ſaid—My lord, the ſeven ſprings of this well are the Seven Wiſe Maſters, who hitherto have traiterouſly governed you and your empire; and have made you blind as ye be without your palace, that they your ſubjects by extortion might pill and pole, you not ſeeing it: but they know not the remedy, therefore hear now my counſel, and this well ſhall be quenched and erring; ſtrike off the firſt Maſter's head, and anon you ſhall ſee the firſt ſpring quench, and ſo by order one after another, till they are all beheaded, and anon all the ſprings with the well ſhall be quenched, and ye ſhall have your ſight as ye had before: and when this was done, the well, with the ſeven prings, was vaniſhed; and as the Emperor had his ſight again, he made the child a great lord, and gave him great abundance of goods. Then ſpake the Empreſs—My lord, have ye well perceived this example that I have told you? And he ſaid—Yea, in the beſt wiſe, and ye have recited a worthy and good example. Then, ſaid ſhe, in the ſame manner your Seven Wiſe Maſters intend to do with you, with their falſe narrations, that

that your ſon may reign over your empire, which God forbid.

The Declaration of the Example.

THIS well is your ſon, whereout floweth ſeven ſprings, that ſignifieth the Seven Wiſe Maſters, which ſon you may not deſtroy without the Seven Wiſe Maſters be brought to nought; that done, this well, that is your ſon, with all his wiles, ſhall not eſcape, but let him taſte of death, (which befits his ſhameful deſerts, leſt he have a help of his Maſters) and after conſequently the Seven Maſters, and ſo you ſhall govern and guide your empire in peace and reſt. The Emperor anon commanded his ſervants to lead his ſon to the gallows, which they were loath to do. Then a great multitude of people gathered with great noiſe and bewailing, ſo that the fourth Maſter, named Malquidrake, heard thereof, who leaped upon his horſe, and haſted to the palace, where he met with his diſciple, and commended him unto him; and when he came before the Emperor, and did his obeiſance, the Emperor ſaid, Little thanks ſhall you have, you old curſed caitif! for ſo ill teaching my ſon. I delivered you my ſon well ſpeaking, and in all things right virtuous! but you have ſent him home a fool, dumb, and a ribauld, for he would have lain with my wife by force, and

therefore all ye forthwith ſhall be hanged: then ſaid the Maſter—My lord, I have not deſerved ſo ill of you; God knoweth why your ſon ſpeaketh not: in ſhort time you ſhall perceive other things, but the time is not yet come. You ſay he would have oppreſſed your wife; that is not truth, nor proved; for neither for one ſingle perſon ſhould you judge your ſon to death. If for the words of your wife you judge your ſon to die, it ſhall be worſe to you than to a certain old man and his wife, and that I ſhall well prove. To whom the Emperor ſaid—I think you do with me as ſometimes Seven Wiſe Men did to an Emperor. Whereupon ſaid the Maſter, the offence of one nor of twenty may not ſound to the rebuke of all other: but one thing of a truth I ſhall ſhew you, that even ſhall come to you, if ye this day put your ſon to death for the words of your wife, of which I could ſhew a notable example. Then ſaid the Emperor, recite it. The Maſter ſaid, if you will call your ſon from death, then will I rehearſe the example, or elſe not. The Emperor commanded he ſhould be called again, and deſired the Maſter to ſay as hereafter followeth:

The Example of the Fourth Maſter.

THERE was an old knight, and a right wiſe man that lived long without wife or child: his friends exhorted him to take a wife.

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The knight thus counſelled by his friends, at laſt agreed unto them, and they gave him to wife the daughter of the Provoſt of Rome, that was rich, and comely of feature, whom when he ſaw, began to love marvellouſly well; and when he had been married a certain ſpace and had no child, in the morning it happened that ſhe went to the church, where ſhe met with her mother, who ſaid—My daughter, how pleaſeth you your marriage and your huſband? ſhe ſaid—Right well, for you have given me an old lame man, to my diſcontentment in all reſpects, and I would you had the ſame time buried me, for I had rather lie and eat with the ſwine, than with him, therefore I muſt needs love another. Then ſaid the mother—God forbid, my dear daughter—How long have I been with your father, and yet never medled with ſuch fooliſhneſs? The daughter ſaid—It no marvel, for you both met in your youth together, and the one took ſolace of the other, but I can of him receive no manner of corporal pleaſure, for he is cold, and on the bed lieth as ſtill as a ſtone, or as a thing immoveable. The mother anſwered—If you love another, tell me what he is. The daughter ſaid—I will love a prieſt. To whom the mother ſaid—It were better and leſs ſin for you to love a knight or 'ſquire. She ſaid—In ſhort time he would be weary of me, and after do me ſhame, and ſo will not the prieſt, for he will keep his own honour and counſel, as well as mine; and ſpiritual men be more true to their lovers than

ſecular

ſecnlar men be. The mother ſaid—Hear my counſel, it will be for your good: Old folks are wi'ely and fell; tempt your huſband firſt, and if you eſcape him without doing you harm or ſmiting, then love the prieſt. The daughter ſaid—I may not ſo long abide. The mother ſaid—Upon my bleſſing abide till you have proved. The daughter ſaid—Upon your bleſſing I will abide till I have attempted. But firit tell me how I ſhall prove him. The mother ſaid—He hath in his orchard a tree which he loveth much, cauſe it to be ſmitten down while he is hunting, and againſt his coming home, make him a fire therewith, and if he forgive you, then love the prieſt. As ſhe heard the counſel of her mother, ſhe went home. To whom her huſband ſaid—Where have you been ſo long? She anſwered—I have been at the church, where I met with my mother, and with her I had a little talk; and ſo began properly to diſſemble. After mid-day the knight rode forth to hunt; then ſhe thinking upon the counſel of her mother, went to the gardener and ſaid—Cut down this young tree newly planted, that I may make a fire thereof to warm my lord withal, at his coming from hunting, for it is a great wind, ſharp and cold. The gardener ſaid—Madam, that I will not do, for my lord loveth this tree better than he doth all the others; nevertheleſs, I ſhall gather wood enough to make a good fire; but in any caſe this I will not hew down. As ſhe heard that, then boldly ſhe took the ax from

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the gardener, and hewed down the tree herſelf, and made the gardener, with others, to bear it home. At evening, when her lord came from hunting, he was very cold, and ſhe made a great fire, and went to meet him, and ſet him a ſtool before the fire to warm him; and as he a little while had ſitten, he perceived the odour of the fire, and called the gardener, and ſaid, I ſmell by this odour that the new plant burneth in the fire. The gardener ſaid—Lord, it is true, my lady, your wife, hath felled it down. The knight ſaid unto her—God forbid that my plant ſhould be cut down by you. She anſwered, anon, lord I have done it, knowing the weather and you alſo cold, and therefore I have ordained this fire for your comfort. And as the knight heard that, he looked angry upon her, and ſaid—O curſed woman! how was thou ſo obdurate relentleſs, and void of pity, as to hew down ſo gentle a young tree, the which thou knoweſt it well, that I loved it above all my other trees? When he had ſo ſaid, ſhe began to weep and excuſe herſelf, and ſaid—My lord, I have done it for your good, and do you take it grievouſly? and began to cry—Woe, woe be to me! Anon, as the knight ſaw the weeping of his wife, and heard the cauſe, he was moved with pity, and ſaid unto her—Ceaſe your weeping, and beware how you anger me any more, or trouble me in any thing I love. The next day, early in the morning, ſhe went again to the churchyard, and met with her mother coming home, and

and they saluted each other. Then the daughter said unto the mother—O dear mother, I will love the priest; for I have attempted my lord, as you counselled me, but all for nought, for anon he forgave it, when he saw me weep a little. Then said the mother—Though old men for one time forgive, they double the pain another time, and therefore I counsel you, that you yet once again tempt him. Then said the daughter—I may no longer abide, for I suffer so much pain for the love of the priest, that with my tongue I cannot tell it; therefore you shall pardon me, I will no more follow your counsel. Then said the mother—For the love that the child should have unto the mother, attempt him yet once more for your father's blessing; then if you go quietly, without harm or beating, love the priest in the name of God. Then answered the daughter—It is to me great pain so long to abide; nevertheless, for the blessing of my father, I will once more attempt him: but tell me how I shall begin. The mother said—I understand that he hath a little hound that he loveth well, and keepeth on his bed, cast the hound with great might before his face against the wall that it die; and if you escape without a stripe, or be forgive it slightly, then in the name of God love the priest. The daughter said—I will in all things do after your counsel; for there is no daughter living at this day that would more gladly have the blessings of father and mother than I; and so she bade her mother farewel, and went home

again,

again, and that day, with great trouble of heart ſhe brought to the night; and when the night was come, ſhe commanded the bed to be covered with purple and cloth of gold, whilſt the knight ſat by the fire; and when the bed was made ready, the little hound, as he was accuſtomed, leaped upon the bed, and ſhe took him by the hinder legs, and with a malicious heart ſhe caſt him againſt the wall, that it lay ſtill dead. When the good old knight ſaw that, he was marvelloufly angry, and ſaid with a loud voice to his wife—O thou moſt cruel and ſpiteful of all wicked women! how couldeſt thou find in thine heart to kill that gentle hound that I loved ſo much? Lord, ſaid ſhe, have you not ſeen how with his feet coming out of the mire, he bewrayed our bed, that is ſo precioufly covered with rich cloaths! And the knight ſaid, with much anger—Know you not that I loved much better my little hound than the bed? When ſhe heard that ſhe began piteoufly to weep, and ſaid—Woe be to me! that ever I was born; for all things that I do for the beſt are turned to the worſt. The knight, out of the treaſure of his pity, would not ſuffer the weeping of his wife, but for that he loved her ſo well, ſaid unto her—Ceaſe your weeping, for I forgive it you altogether; and I counſel you, beware how you diſpleaſe me from henceforth; and ſo they went to bed together.

Upon

Upon the morrow, very early, ſhe went to the church, where ſhe met with her mother, to whom, when ſhe had done reverence, as it behoved her, ſhe ſaid—Mother, now I will love the prieſt, for I have attempted my huſband the ſecond time, and all things he hath ſuffered. The mother ſaid—O my dear daughter, there's no cruelty or falſhood above the cruelty of old folks, and therefore once more prove him. To whom the daughter anſwered, Mother, you labour in vain; for if you wiſt what and how much pain I ſuffered for the prieſt's love, you ſhould help me if you love me. The mother ſaid—Hear me, daughter, this time, and I ſhall never let you more: think how you have ſucked milk out of my breaſt, and the great pain I ſuffered at your birth; by theſe pains, my dear daughter, I charge you deny not this good petition, and I promiſe you no more to let you, nor hinder you of your content, but rather to help you. Then anſwered the daughter—It is to my great pain to abſtain ſo long from the love of the prieſt; nevertheleſs, for the great charge you have laid to me, and for that you have made a vow no more to let me, but to further me, tell me how I might attempt him, and I ſhall once more adventure. The mother ſaid, I know on Sunday next he intendeth to have us all to dinner, your father, and I, and all your friends, with all the reſt of the city, and when you are ſet in your place, and all the meats are brought and ſerved upon the table,

faſten

faſten your keys privily, that hang at your girdle, in the table cloth, and then feign to have forgotton your knife, and ſay theſe words openly: See what a ſhort wit I am of, I have forgotton my knife in my chamber! and then riſe up haſtily, and go, and the cloth, with all the meats, you ſhall overthrow upon the ground, and if you eſcape without pain, I make a vow to God, I ſhall never let you after. The daughter ſaid—That ſhall I gladly do; and ſo took her leave and departed. The feaſt-day came, and all, (as the mother ſaid) was bid: The ſervants covered the table, all were ſet, and the daughter ſet over againſt her lord; and when the table was well ſerved with meats, and other things belonging, the lady of the houſe ſaid with a loud voice: See how forgetful I am! I have left my knife in my chamber, which I muſt fetch; and ſo roſe up haſtily, and drew the cloth with all the meat upon it with her, and all the gold veſſels and the ſalts fell upon the ground. The knight waxed ſore angry in heart, but diſſembling before the gueſts, and commanded another cloth and other meats to be brought, and with joy ſaluted his gueſts to eat and make good cheer, ſo that they were all merry. The feaſt, or dinner done, they all gave thanks to the knight, and took their leaves every man towards his own houſe. Upon the next day in the morning, the knight roſe early, and went to the church to hear ſervice; after which, he went to the barber, and ſaid unto him—Are you expert in blood-letting

ting in what vein I will desire you? And he said—Sir, I am expert in what vein you can name in a man's body. The knight said—I am content, come with me: and when he was come into the house, he entered his chamber where his wife lay in bed, and said unto her—Rise up quickly. Then said she, What shall I do up so early? it is not nine of the clock. The knight said—You must rise up, for you must be letten blood in both your arms. She said—I was never letten blood, and shall I now bleed? Then said the knight, That is truth, and therefore you are a fool: remember, first you hewed down my tree, another time you killed my little hound, and but yesterday you shamed me before all my friends and parents. If I should suffer you thus to go on, you would for ever shame me. The cause hereof I consider: you have evil and wild blood within your body, and therefore I will that the corrupt blood be drawn out, that ye from henceforth shall put me no more to shame and anger. So he caused to be made a great fire, and she stood and cried, and held up her hands towards heaven, and said—My lord, forgive my trespass, and have pity on me at this time, and I will never more offend you. The knight said—Pray for no mercy; for the mercy that God hath wrought towards thee at this present, is this, that except thou holdest thine arm strait, I shall soon have thy heart's blood, and said to the barber—Smite hard, and make a deep

hole

hole in her arm, or I ſhall give you a great ſtripe. Then ſmote the barber ſo ſore, that the blood came abundantly out, and the knight

would not ſuffer him to ſtench it, until the time that ſhe changed her colour in her viſage; and as this was done, he bade it to be ſtopped, and willed the barber to ſmite the vein upon the other arm. Then ſhe cried with a very loud voice—My ſweet hnſband, I pray have compaſſion on me, for now I die! The knight anſwered——Wife, you ſhould have thought on this before, ere you had done to me theſe three deſpights. Then ſhe held out her left arm, and the barber ſmote thereon a great hole, that the blood came out right ugly, and he ſuffered her to bleed till her viſage was changed and ſhe ſwooned: then ſaid the knight

knight—Now unbind her arm, and ſtench it; and ſaid unto her—Now go to bed and ſtudy, and think henceforth to amend your life, or I ſhall draw the blood of your heart. As this was done, he gave the barber his reward, and he went again to his own houſe, and his wife being under the hands of her maids, almoſt dead, was led to her bed: ſhe made one of her maidens go to her mother in haſte, and ſay—that I deſire her to come and ſpeak with me before I die. The mother, when ſhe heard that was glad of the correction of her daughter, and came haſtily to her. When the daughter heard her mother, ſhe ſaid—O my ſweet mother! I am almoſt dead, for I have bled ſo much, that I believe I ſhall not eſcape death: then anſwered the mother—Said I not that old men are right cruel? Will ye now love the prieſt? She ſaid, The devil may the prieſt confound, I will never love other but my huſband. Then ſaid the Maſter to the Emperor—Lord, have you underſtood me? He anſwered—Right well, for amongſt all I have heard, this was the beſt example. Three evil deeds ſhe did to her huſband, and I doubt not, if ſhe had done the fourth, ſhe would have ſhamed him for ever. Then ſaid the Maſter—Therefore I counſel you, that you beware of your wife, leſt it happen worſe to you, which appears manifeſtly in this example, if you put to death your only ſon for her words, you ſhall be deceived in the end, and for ever ſhall repent it. The Emperor ſaid—Truly, Maſter, this

this day my ſon ſhall not die. The Maſter ſaid—My lord, I thank you that you for my ſake this day have ſpared your only ſon.

The fifth Complaint of the Empreſs.

THE Empreſs hearing the child was not dead, forthwith apparelled herſelf, and cauſed the wains to be in readineſs, as though ſhe would have gone into her own country, to her father, to complain of the great ſhame that was done her, and yet could have no remedy. The ſervants ſeeing that, ſhewed to the Emperor, that the Empreſs was going into her country. When he perceived that, he went to her ſaying—Whither are you going? I hoped you had loved me, ſo that in all the world you would have ſought no ſolace but with me: to which ſhe ſaid—That is true, and therefore I go from you; for I had rather hear of your death than ſee you die. You delight ſo much to hear theſe Maſters, that it ſhall happen to you as it did to Octavian the Emperor, the which was ſo covetous, that the noblemen of the empire buried him quick, and filled his mouth full of molten gold. The Emperor ſaid—Dear wife, do not ſo, that the blame on you and me be not laid. Then ſaid the Empreſs—Truly, Sir, the blame is yours, for have you not promiſed me many times your ſon ſhall die, yet he liveth? Therefore I will

no more believe. Then ſaid the Emperor—It becometh not a king every cauſe lightly to diſcuſs without great advice, eſpecially upon his ſon; on whom it is not meet, but upon deliberation and good counſel to paſs judgment; therefore I pray you tell me ſomewhat by which I may govern my life, for it is the deſtruction of a king, without advice, indiſcreetly to give judgment. She anſwered—I will gladly tell you a notable example, ſo that henceforth you will not be deſirous to hear the Maſters, and began in this form following.

The fifth Example of the Empreſs.

OCTAVIANUS, the Emperor, reigned in Rome, right rich and covetous, and above all things he loved gold. The citizens of Rome at that time did much harm, and many great outrages to other nations, inſomuch that divers regions were moved againſt the Romans. In that time was Maſter Virgilius, the which excelled in magic and other ſciences all other Maſters: the citizens prayed him that by his art he would deviſe how they of their enemies might have warning beforehand, whereby they might provide for themſelves the better. And he made by his cunning a tower, and on the tower did cauſe to be ſet as many images as in all the world were

regions

regions and provinces, and in the midſt of the tower an image, which held in his hand an apple, or a great round ball of gold, and every image of the tower held in his hand a little bell, and ſtood turning and looking towards his own province to him aſſigned; and as often as any province would rebel againſt the Romans, ſo often turned he to the images of the land, and rung the bell: that hearing, the citizens of Rome armed themſelves, and ſo that province haſted with all their might the ſame to ſubdue; ſo there was no land ſo great that could wreak them upon the Romans, and therefore were they feared over all the world. Alſo that Maſter Virgil made for the comfort of the poor people a light that always burned; and by that light he made two baths, the one of them hot, in which the poor people might bathe and waſh themſelves; and the other cold, in which they might themſelves refreſh. Betwixt the light and the baths, he made an image ſtanding in whoſe forehead was written—He that ſmiteth me ſhall anon have vengeance. The image ſtood there many years, and at laſt came a clerk and beheld the image, and read the writing, and thought in himſelf—What vengeance he might find; therefore I do believe better, if any man ſmite thee, and thou falleſt therewith to the earth, he ſhall find ſome treaſure under thy feet, and therefore is the writing that no man ſhould have it. And the clerk lift up his hand, and gave the image a great ſtroke that it fell to the ground; and

anon

anon the light was out, and the baths were vanifhed away, and he found no treafure. The poor folks perceiving that, were all forrowful, and laid their curfes and complaints unto him, that for his fingular covetoufnefs had deftroyed the images, and robbed them of fo great a folace. Hereafter affembled three kings, which by the Romans had fuffered great wrongs, and went to take counfel how they might be avenged of the Romans, and fome of them faid—We labour in vain, for as long as there ftandeth the tower with the images we cannot do any thing againft them.

At the counfel arofe four knights, and faid, We have thought on a remedy how to deftroy the tower with the images, and that to do we will lay our lives to pledge, if you will be at the coft. Then anfwered the king—What coft fhall we be at? they anfwered—Four tun of gold. Then faid the king—Take the gold, and fulfil your promife. The knights took the gold, and went towards Rome, and when they came thither in the night without one of the gates, in the ditch full of water, they drowned one of the tuns with the gold in it, and another tun they drowned by the fecond gate, and the third tun they drowned by the third gate, and the fourth tun by the fourth gate; and when they had thus done, early in the morning they entered into the city at an hour convenient, and as the Emperor went over to the market they did him reverence. The Emperor feeing them, demanded from whence

whence they were? of what ſcience, and what ſervice they could do? they anſwered—We are all of far countries, and ſooth-ſayers, ſo perfect that there is never a thing ſo privily hid, but we ſhall find it out by our dreams. We have heard that ye labour and have pleaſure in ſuch things, and therefore we came unto you to know if you have need of our ſervice? the Emperor ſaid—I will prove you, and if it be, that I find you true, you ſhall have of me great rewards and thanks. They ſaid—We aſk nothing but the half of the gold which by us ſhall be found. The Emperor ſaid—I am well content. And thus they had with the Emperor many words. At night, when the Emperor was going to bed, they ſaid unto him, My lord, if it pleaſe you this night ſhall the eldeſt of us ſet his cunning to work and dream, and the third day he ſhall ſhew you his dream, and what it ſignifieth. The Emperor ſaid—Go in God's name. And they went forth with great gladneſs; and this night they paſſed with great joy and mirth, upon truſt they ſhould come to a good purpoſe. When the third day was come, they went early to the Emperor: the firſt ſaid—My lord, pleaſe you to go with us without one of the gates of the city, and I will ſhew where there is a tun full of gold hid. The Emperor ſaid—I ſhall go with you and ſee if it be true that you ſay: and when they were come to the place, they drew out the tun that they before there had put; the Emperor when he ſaw that, was glad, and gave them

 their

their part. Then ſaid the ſecond dreamer—My lord, this night I ſhall dream. Then the Emperor ſaid—God give you a good dream: the next night came, and he took out the other tun and gave it to the Emperor, and took alſo his ſhare. In the ſame manner the third and the fourth: upon which the Emperor was out of all meaſure joyous, and ſaid—He had not ſeen ſuch true and expert ſooth-ſayers, or dreamers, as they were. Then ſaid they all of them together, as if it had been out of one mouth—My lord, we have all, one after another, dreamed, the which you have ſeen, they be all proved: but now if it pleaſeth you that we dream altogether this night, we truſt that to us ſhall be ſhewed, that we ſhall find a great quantity of gold and riches. The Emperor ſaid—God give you a good dream, which to me and you may be profitable. On the next morrow they came again unto the Emperor, and ſaid unto him, with countenance full of joy—My lord, we bring good and profitable tidings; for this night in our ſleeps, ſo great a treaſure is to us ſhewed, the which if you will ſuffer it to be ſought, you ſhall be ſo enriched, that in this world none ſhall be like unto you. The Emperor ſaid—Where ſhall we find this treaſure? They ſaid—Under the foundation of the tower that the images ſtand upon. The Emperor anſwered—God defend I ſhould, for the love of gold, deſtroy the tower with the images, wherewith we from our enemies be defended and warned. They ſaid to him again

—My

—My lord, have you found us in our sayings otherwise than true? The Emperor said—Nay. O lord, said they, we with our own hands shall give out the gold, without hurting the tower, or the images. And it is expedient that secretly in the night by us it be done, for dread of resort and concourse of the people, lest that it should run in the clamour of them, and they take that good gold away from you and us. The Emperor said—Go, in the name of God, and do your best as you will, or can, and I shall to-morrow early come to you. Then went they with gladness, and in the night were let into the tower, and then with great haste and diligence they undermined it, and on the next day, very early in the morning, mounted upon their horses, and rode again towards their own country with joy and glory, and ere they came without the sight of Rome, the tower fell down on the morning ensuing. When it was fallen, and the senators it perceived, they sorrowed greatly, and there was a great bewailing throughout all the city; and they went unto the Emperor, and said—Lord, how may it be that this tower is thus fallen, by the which we have always had warning afore of our enemies? He answered and said—To me came four false deceivers, and feigned themselves to be sooth-sayers, and that they could find treasure in the ground, and said, that under the foundation of the tower was hidden an innumerable sum of gold, the which they should undermine, without

hurting the tower and images. I gave faith to them, and they have deceived me. They answered—Ye have coveted so much gold, that for your unsatiate covetousness we shall all be destroyed; but first your covetousness shall fall upon yourself. Then they took him and led him to the capital, and laid him on his back, and poured his mouth full of molten gold;

saying to him—You have desired gold, and therefore you shall drink gold: and after that, they buried him quick. Not long after that, came the enemy against the Romans, and overcame and destroyed them all.

Then said the Empress unto the Emperor—Have ye, my lord, this example well understood? And he said—Right well. Then, said she,

ſhe, the tower with images is your body with five wits: as long as you live there is none ſo hardy to trouble or to make war upon you, nor upon your people; that hath your ſon right well underſtood, and doth with the Seven Maſters and their falſe narrations or fables, ſeek how they might deſtroy you; for you are over much covetous to incline to them, inſomuch that they ſhall undermine you, and caſt you under foot, and bring you to nought: the images are your five wits that be all loſt, and foraſmuch as you be fooliſh, they ſhall deſtroy you, and your ſon ſhall obtain your empire.

The Emperor ſaid, Ye have recited a good example; wherefore it ſhall not happen to me as to the tower, but my ſon firſt this day ſhall taſte the bitterneſs of death. To whom the Empreſs ſaid, If ye do ſo, ye ſhall ſpeed well, and live long. Upon the ſame day he commanded his ſon to be led to hanging; and as he was led toward the gallows, came riding againſt him, upon an horſe, the fifth Maſter toward the palace, who came before the Emperor, and ſaluted him with all reverence; but he deſpiſed his ſalutation, and put him in fear of his life. The Maſter ſaid unto the Emperor—My Lord, I have not deſerved for to die; and to deſpiſe my ſalutation it is not for your honour, for your ſon hath not with us been of ſuch condition as ye repute him, as ye in ſhort time ſhall find; and that he ſpeaketh not is of his great wiſdom: and know ye, that he ſhall well ſpeak as his time cometh, though he now

ſpeaketh not, as you in ſhort time ſhall hear: but that he would have aſhamed your wife, believe not, for ſo wiſe a man as he is would never attempt ſo ſhameful a deed; and if you put him to death for your wife's words, ye ſhall not eſcape without ſhame and vengeance, like as Ippocras eſcaped not without vengeance for the death of Gallienus his couſin. The Emperor ſaid—That I would fain hear and underſtand. Then ſaid the Maſter—What would it avail me to tell you this narration for your profit, if in the mean ſeaſon your ſon ſhould die? Wherefore, if you will call again your ſon, it ſhall be diſcovered at your pleaſure, after do as you think beſt. The Emperor called again his ſon, and ſet him in priſon, and then began the Maſter to tell on the manner as follows.

The Example of the Fifth Maſter.

SOMETIMES there was a famous phyſician named Ippocras, right cunning, who excelled moſt others in learning and ſcience; he had with him his nephew Gallienus, the which he loved ſo much. This nephew was of great wit, and bent his mind and wit to learn of Ippocras the ſcience of phyſic. When Ippocras perceived that, inſomuch as he could, he hid from him his cunning, fearing he

he ſhould excel him in that knowledge, for the great wit he was of.

As Gallienus ſaw this, he ſtudied and exerciſed, inſomuch that in ſhort time he had perfect cunning in phyſic, for the which Ippocras envied him much. It happened upon a time hereafter, that the King of Hungary ſent his meſſenger unto Ippocras, that he ſhould come unto him, for to cure his ſon. Ippocras excuſed himſelf, and ſent his couſin Gallienus with letters of his excuſe for his not coming. When Gallienus was come before the king, he was worſhipfully received, and they wondered Ippocras would not come. He excuſed him, ſaying, that he had many great things to do, and he might not come, but hath ſent me in his ſtead; and with the help of God, I ſhall make whole the child. That pleaſed very well the King. Gallienus went to the child, and when he had ſeen the virtue, and touched his pulſes, he ſaid to his Queen—O excellent princeſs, I pray you hear and ſuffer my words, and tell me who is the father of the child. She ſaid—Who ſhould be the father, but my lord the King? Gallienus ſaid—I am ſure he is not the father. She anſwered—If you will ſay that for a truth, I ſhall cauſe your head to be ſmote off. He anſwered—I ſay once again, that this King is not the father, and I am not come hither to loſe my head, for I have not deſerved any ſuch reward, and was going his way. The Queen ſpake—O good maſter Gallienus, if you will keep it ſecret, and not diſ-

cover me, I ſhall open unto you my heart. The maſter ſaid—God defend that from me, that I to any perſon ſhould ſhew it; and therefore, O noble Queen, ſhew it boldly to me, for it ſhall never paſs my mouth, and I ſhall make your ſon whole. She ſaid—If ye do that, ye ſhall have a good reward; hear therefore what I ſhall ſay. By fortune came hither unto my Lord the King of Burgundy, and he was ſo long converſant with me, that this child by him I bare. Then ſaid the Maſter—Fear not, I knew it was ſo before. And anon he gave the child medicines, and compounded things whereof to eat and drink, and the child was eaſed of his infirmity. And when the King heard that the child was recovered of his ſickneſs, he gave unto the Maſter a good reward; but of the Queen he ſecretly received a great gift, and ſpecial thanks, and ſo went his ways. And when he was come home, Ippocras his maſter demanded of him, ſaying—Have ye beheld the child? And he ſaid—Yea. Then aſked he him, what he gave him, either compounds or uncompounded things? Then ſaid Ippocras—That mother of the child is not true to her huſband. That is truth, ſaith Gallienus. Then Ippocras was moved with envy, and thought in himſelf, If there be not found a remedy, my ſciences ſhall be no more ſet by, but he ſhall be praiſed above me. And from that day forward he deviſed how he might ſlay him. Upon a day Ippocras called him, and ſaid, Come go with me to ſeek and gather

herbs

herbs in the garden. To whom he ſaid, Maſter, I am ready. And when they were come into the garden, Ippocras ſaid, I ſee that this herb is right virtuous, ſtoop down and gather me of it. And Gallienus did ſo. And as they went about the garden, ſaid Ippocras, Now I well perceive the odour of this herb, that is more precious than gold; and therefore ſtoop down to the ground, and draw it out with the root, for it is much worth. Gallienus bowed down himſelf to pull out the herb, and Ippocras drew out his knife and killed him.

After that, Ippocras fell ſick to the death, that the ſtrength of his body failed him, and did as much as he could to help himſelf, but without effect. And as the ſcholars and diſciples heard of it, they went unto him, and did what they

might for the profit of his health, but it answered them nothing.

When Ippocras this perceived, he said unto his scholars—Fetch me a great tun, and fill it to the brim with water. And when they had so done, he said unto them—Make now therein an hundred holes: and when that was done, there went none of the water out. Then said Ippocras—Behold, my most dear disciples, how the vengeance of God is fallen me, as you may plainly see; for in this tun are an hundred holes, and goeth not thereout one drop: right so there cometh no virtue out of the herbs to help me; and therefore what ye do unto me helpeth not, for I must die. But, my dear children, if my nephew Gallienus were alive, he could heal me, whom I have slain, and that grieveth me sore, and therefore the vengeance of God cometh upon me. And this said, he turned to the wall, and gave up the ghost. Then said the Master unto the Emperor—My Lord, understand you well what I have said? He answered—Yea, right well. What hurt had it been to him, if Gallienus had lived?

The Master answered—It had been better for Ippocras at that time, had he not died; and therefore by the right wise judgment of God, his medicines availed him not; and therefore I shewed to you that it shall happen worse to you if that you put to death your son for the words of your wife, who, in time of necessity, shall ease and succour you. And consider you not, that ye have, after the first wife,

wedded

wedded this wife, that ye now have, and so you may the third and fourth, and never shall ye have such a son that shall save you from peril. The Emperor said—Truly he shall not die.

Then said the Master—Then do you that becometh the wisdom of your years, and the royalty of your person, and I commend you to God, and I thank you that ye have this day for me spared your son. The Emperor said—I mark this well, that women are very crafty; therefore I will not for you, but for myself spare him.

The sixth Complaint of the Empress.

WHEN the Empress had knowledge thereof, she shewed herself impatient, that all that saw her, or heard her, wondered, and said to the Emperor—Your wife pineth as though she would shortly die. The Emperor hearing thereof, went to her, and said—Wherefore, good Lady, be you so impatient? She answered, saying—O Lord, how should I hold it in, when I am the only daughter of a king, and your wife, and in your company I have had great despight, and you have promised to punish him but perform it not! The Emperor said—I wot not what to do; ye labour to have my son put to death, and the

Maſters labour to ſave his life; and amongſt theſe I know he is my ſon, but where the truth is that I know not. Then ſaid ſhe, this is the cauſe whereof I complain, that ye believe the Maſters more than me; and therefore it ſhall happen to you as it did to a king and his ſteward.

Then ſaid the Emperor, tell me that example, peradventure it may move me ſooner to put my ſon to death. She ſaid—Gladly; but I pray give attention to what I ſay: and began as enſueth.

The ſixth Example of the Empreſs.

THERE was a king moſt proud and deformed in his viſage, ſo that moſt women hated him. The king thought to deſtroy all Rome, and carry away the bodies of Peter and Paul; who, while he was in the mind, called his ſteward that was ſecretly with him of his privy council, and ſaid unto him—Go ſeek a fair woman that this night may ſleep with me. The ſteward anſwered—My Lord, ye know your infirmity, and no woman would do evil without a great ſum of money: the king ſaid—Think you for my money I will want one? Have I not gold and ſilver enough? though it were a thouſand florins I would give it: the ſteward hearing that, was ſmitten with covet-

covetouſneſs, and went to his wife, which was fair, chaſte, and of good kindred, and ſaid to her—O my good wife, my Lord deſireth to ſleep with a virtuous woman, and would not forbear it though ſhe aſk a thouſand florins; and hath commanded me for to provide him one; therefore I counſel you, that you may get that money:—the wife ſaid—Were it ſo that the King were not ſo proud and deformed, yet would I not conſent for the ſin againſt God—the ſteward ſaid, I command you, and promiſe you, that without you conſent herein, ye ſhall never have a good day with me. She hearing that, trembled, inſomuch that for fear ſhe conſented unto him.

The ſteward then went unto the king, and ſaid, Sir, I have found a fair woman, and ſhe

is come of a very good houſe, which will not have leſs than a thouſand florins: in the evening ſhe ſhall come, and early in the morning muſt go away, that ſhe be not ſeen: the king anſwered, I am contented. When night was come, the ſteward led his wife to the king's bed, made faſt the door, and went his way. Early in the morning the ſteward aroſe, and went unto the king, and ſaid—My Lord, it will be day within a while, it is good you perform your promiſe, and let the woman go. The king ſaid—She pleaſeth me ſo well, that ſo ſoon ſhe ſhould not depart. When he heard that, he departed all ſorry, and tarried awhile, and came to the king again, and ſaid—My Lord, the morning is come, therefore let the woman go, and as I promiſed her, left ſhe be aſhamed. The king ſaid——Yet ſhall ſhe not go; therefore go out and ſhut the door. The ſteward, right ſorrowful, departed, and went up and down with a heavy heart, till the clear day appeared; then he entered again into the chamber, and ſaid—My Lord, it is clear day, ſuffer the woman to depart, that ſhe be not aſhamed. The king anſwered—I ſay ſhe ſhall not yet depart, for her company is to me well pleaſing. The ſteward hearing that, could no longer forbear to hold his own counſel, but ſaid—O my good Lord, I beſeech you ſuffer her to depart, for it is my own wife. The king hearing that, ſaid to him—Open the window; and when it was open, the bright day appeared, and he beheld the woman fair, and perceived

ceived it was the wife of his ſteward, and ſaid, O thou ſtain of manhood, and ſhame of the creation! Why hast thou for ſo little money ſhamed thy good wife, and delivered her unto me unwitting? Therefore haſte thee, and get thee out of my realm, and never come in my ſight; for if ever I ſee thee, thou ſhalt die the moſt ſhameful death that can be imagined. When the ſteward heard that, he fled, and durſt not abide, and never more came into the realm. And the king kept that wife all his life-time in great honour, and gave her plenty of all things that to her appertained.

After that, the king cauſed to be aſſembled a mighty army of puiſſant men of war, and went to the city of Rome with great might, and beſieged it on all ſides, until the Romans would have delivered to him (for to have withdrawn himſelf from thence) the bodies of the holy Apoſtles, St. Peter and Paul.

Then there was in the city Seven Wiſe Maſters, as ye now have, by the counſel of whom all the city was governed. And the citizens came unto them, and ſaid—What ſhall we do? It behoves us that we give unto our enemies the bodies of the holy Apoſtles, or the city. Then anſwered the firſt Maſter—I ſhall with my wiſdom this day ſave the city, and the bodies of the Apoſtles: and ſo every one of them promiſed for one day to do the like, in like manner as your Maſters have promiſed your ſon. With that, the king began to aſſault the city in all parts. Then began the firſt Maſter

to

to alledge so wisely to have peace, that the king that day left his assault, and withdrew a little from the city. And so did all the Masters one after another, till the last, unto whom came the burgess of the city, and said--O Master, ye shall understand, that the king hath sworn, that to-morrow with all his strength he will win the city, and we must all be in jeopardy to lose our lives: therefore, acquitting your promise, defend us from danger, like as your fellows before you have done. Then answered the Master--Fear not, for to morrow I shall by my cunning shew such an operation, that the king and all his might should leave the stage. The next day the king gave a great assault to the city: then went the Master and cloathed himself in a marvellous strange vesture, having therein the feathers of peacocks and other fowls of divers colours, and took two bright swords in each hand one, and went therewith, and stood upon the highest tower of the city, and began to move and turn, and shew himself towards the host, so that they might all behold him; and he held in his mouth the two bright swords that marvellously shined. They without the king's host beholding that, said unto him--O king, behold on the top of yonder tower a wonderful thing! Yea, quoth he, I see it right well, it is marvellous; but what it is I know not. They said--It is the God of Christian folks, that is come out of heaven to slay us with two swords if we longer abide. The king hearing that,

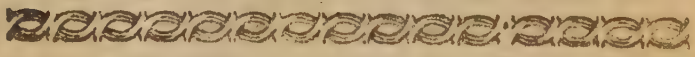
trembled

trembled for fear, and ſaid—What ſhall we do? There is but one way, and that is, that we depart from hence, leſt their God revenge himſelf upon us. Then began the king with his hoſt to flie; notwithſtanding there was no need, for they of the Maſter was deceived. When the Romans ſaw that, they haſtily purſued them, well armed, and ſlew the king, with many of the people, and in that manner, by great ſubtlety of the Maſters, was the mighty king with his army ſubdued. Then ſaid the Empreſs unto the Emperor——Lord, have you underſtood what I have ſaid? He ſaid—Yea, with good attention. She ſaid—Now you have heard what I ſaid unto you at the beginning of this narration of the ſteward, that the king truſted ſo much, which for covetouſneſs

vetousness shamed his own wife, and for that was banished out of the land: in like manner your son, for the desire he hath to the empire, intendeth to destroy you: but whilst he is in your power, do with him as the king did with his steward. If you will not put him to death, then put him out of your empire, that ye may live in safe-guard of your life. And have you also heard how the king lay before Rome, and how he was by the Wise Masters deceived, and he, with his followers, were slain? In like manner the Seven Wise Masters intended to deal with you, and with crafty wiles deceive you, and in the end traiterously murder you, that so your son might reign in your empire. Whereupon, answered the Emperor—That shall not be, for to-morrow my son shall die. Then he commanded his servants forthwith to lead his son to execution. When the people heard these things, they gathered in great troops, much lamenting the death of the Emperor's son. And as soon as the sixth Master heard thereof, he hasted to the Emperor's court, and saluted him with reverence, but he disdainfully threatened him that he should be put to death with his son, for he was with them made dumb and a ribauld, which was shewed towards his wife. The Master replied, I have not deserved to die with your son, but to have large gifts; for he is not dumb, as you shall hear within three days, if he may live so long; but if you put him to death for the words of your wife, then I shall marvel at

your

your wisdom, and without doubt it shall happen to you as sometimes it happened to a knight that so much allowed the saying of his wife, that he was bound to an horse tail, and drawn through the city to the gallows. The Emperor said—For the love of God shew me that example, that I may beware of that evil. That I will not do, said the Master, without you call again your son. Then he commanded to call back his son; and the Master began as followeth.



The Example of the Sixth Master.

SOMETIMES there was an Emperor of Rome which had three knights, whom he loved above all others: in the same city there was an ancient knight that had wedded a fair young wife, which above all things he loved as you do the Empress. The lady could sing with such sweetness, that many desired her company. It befel on a season, as she sat in the house, her visage turned to the street, that she might see them that walked by, and began sweetly to sing, that all folks delighted to hear her. By chance came that ways a knight of the Emperor's court that heard her voice, and beholding her with a willing mind and attentive ear, he was exceedingly taken in love: and entering the house, fell into talk with her greatly,

greatly, but chiefly of love; and amongſt other talk, he demanded of her, what he ſhould give her to ſleep by her ſide one night? She anſwered—An hundred florins. Then ſaid the knight—Tell me when I ſhall come, and I will give it you. Sir, quoth ſhe, when I have convenient time, I ſhall ſend for you. The next day ſhe ſung in the ſame place, and the ſecond knight of the Emperor's court came by that way, who likewiſe was ſmitten in her love, and he alſo promiſed her an hundred florens. To whom ſhe made the like promiſe. The third day came to her another knight, and unto him likewiſe ſhe conſented, and he promiſed her an hundred florens if ſhe ſhould give him knowledge of the time, which ſhe alſo promiſed. Theſe three knights having ſo ſecretly ſpoken with the lady, that not one of them had knowledge of one another's coming unto her. Now the lady was deceitful, and came to her huſband, and ſaid—Sir, I have a ſecret matter to ſhew you; wherein, if you follow my counſel our poverty you may largely relieve. The knight replied—Tell it me, and I will keep it as ſecret as my life, and fulfil it to the utmoſt of my power. She anſwered—Three knights of the Emperor's court have been with me, one after another, in ſuch wiſe, that none of them knoweth of another's counſel, and each knight offered me an hundred florens. Might we an hundred florens get, and no man know it, ſhould not our poverty be well relieved? Then ſaid the knight—Yea; therefore whatſo-

ever

ever you will counſel me, I ſhall willingly perform. Then ſaid ſhe, I give you counſel, that when the knights ſhall come with their florens, you ſhall ſtand behind the gate with your ſword drawn, and as they come (being they come one after another) you ſhall ſlay them, and ſo we ſhall have the three hundred florens they bring, without any man's knowledge. The knight anſwered—O my beſt beloved wife, I fear this evil cannot be hid, and we ſhall therefore ſuffer death if it were known —She anſwered, I ſhall this work begin, and therefore make a good end, fear not. When the knight ſaw ſhe was ſo hardy, it cauſed him to be more bold. Then ſhe ſent for the firſt

knight, and he came, without tarrying, to the gate, and knocked. And ſhe aſked, if he had brought

brought the hundred florens? He answered—I have brought them: then she let him in, and he had no sooner entered but her husband murdered him. Immediately came the second knight, and in like manner was slain. And not long after came the third knight, whom he also slew. Having finished the butchery, they conveyed the murdered bodies into a secret chamber. When they had thus done, the knight said unto the lady—O dear wife, if these dead bodies should be found with us, we shall die the most shameful death that can be imagined, for it is not possible but these three knights will be missed in the Emperor's court, and great search will be made for them thro' the city. She answered and said—Sir knight, I have now this work begun, and will make a good end, fear it not, I have said. This lady had a brother, which had the government of the wealth of the city, that on nights watched in the streets with his fellows. She stood at the gate, and called unto her brother, and said—O my best beloved brother, I have a secret matter which I would not make it known, therefore come in with me, and I will relate it unto you. And when he was entered the house, the lady received him friendly, and gave him wine, and said—My beloved brother, this is the cause I have called you, for I have much need of your good counsel. The brother answered—Speak boldly, and whatsoever I may do to my power, shall be at your desire without any letting. Then said she, Yester-

day

day came a knight in friendſhip, but afterwards he fell into ſuch variance with my huſband, that he ſlew him, and he lieth here dead in my chamber. Now, my dear brother, we have no man that we may truſt, but you; and if this dead body be found in our houſe, we ſhall be put to death. Now ſhe mentioned but one. Her brother ſaid, Deliver him me in a ſack, and I will bear him to the ſea. She hearing that, was glad thereof, and delivered him the body of the firſt knight. He took it, and went a good ſpace, and caſt him therein: and as ſoon as this was done, he came to his ſiſter, and ſaid to her, Give me of the beſt wine, for you are of him rid; and ſhe gave him thanks, and went to her chamber, as though ſhe had gone for wine, and began to cry aloud, The knight that was caſt into the ſea is come again. As her brother heard that, he marvelled ſore, and ſaid, Give me him, I ſhall ſee if he will riſe again, and took the ſecond knight (ſuppoſing it had been the body of the firſt) and went to the ſea and with a ſtone drowned him. That done, he went again to his ſiſter, and ſaid, Now fill me a cup of good wine, for I have drowned him ſo deep that he ſhall never come again. Then ſaid ſhe, thanks be to God, and went again to her chamber, and feigned to fetch wine, and cried aloud, Alas! he is riſen again, and is come out of the ſea. And as her brother heard that, with a great wonder he ſaid, What devil is this that I have caſt into the water, and yet he is come again!

Deliver

Deliver him me the third time, and I ſhall ſee if he will come again. Then ſhe gave him the third knight, which he believed had been the firſt, and went without the city to a great foreſt, and made a great fire to caſt him therein, and when he was almoſt burnt, the brother went a little diſtance to do his need. Then came a knight that was to ride to the city, where in the morning ſhould be a tourney and juſting. It was cold weather, and dark, and not far from the city; and when he ſaw the fire he drew thereto, and alighted, and warmed him.

The watchman came and ſaid, What art thou? The knight ſaid, I am a knight: then ſaid the watchman, Thou art no knight, but a devil, for I firſt caſt thee into the water, then with a great ſtone I drowned thee, and the third time I put thee into this fire, ſuppoſing thou hadſt been burnt, and yet thou ſtandeſt here: and then he took the knight with his horſe, and caſt them both into the fire. After that, he went unto his ſiſter, and told what happened, and ſaid, Now bring me the beſt wine; for after I had burnt him, I found him again by the fire with a horſe, and have caſt them both into the fire; and by this his ſiſter perceived he had burnt a knight of the tourney; who anon brought him the wine abundantly; and after he had well drunk, he departed thence. Not long after, there fell a great contention betwixt the knight and his wife, ſo that he ſmote her; and ſhe had indignation

nation thereof, being angry, and ſaid, that many heard her, O wretch, wilt thou kill me, as thou didſt the three knights? Certain men hearing that, laid hands on them, and brought them to the Emperor, and the woman confeſſed that her huſband had ſlain the three knights of the Emperor's, and how he took from them three hundred florins. And it being ſo found, both were drawn at a horſe tail and hanged. Then ſaid the Maſter to the Emperor, Have ye underſtood what I have ſaid? He anſwered, Right well: I ſay for certain that wife was the worſt woman that might be; for firſt ſhe moved him to murder, and afterwards diſcovered him. The Maſter ſaid, Without doubt it ſhall happen to you worſe, if you put your ſon to death by advice of your wife: the Emperor ſaid, My ſon ſhall not die this day. The Maſter hearing that, gave thanks to the Emperor, took leave, and went his way.

The ſeventh Complaint of the Empreſs.

WHEN the Empreſs heard the Emperor's ſon was yet living, as a mad woman, ſhe ran to the Emperor weeping, and ſaying, O unhappy woman! What ſhall I do? I muſt needs ſlay myſelf that am aſhamed, and no puniſhment thereupon done. The Emperor anſwered, God defend that you ſhould have mind on ſuch a wicked deed! ſuffer a while,

and you ſhall have a good end. She anſwered—Sir, the end ſhall be evil; for of that ſhall follow us great confuſion. The Emperor ſaid, Leave off ſuch talk. She ſaid—Lord, it ſhall come to you and to your ſon as to a king and his ſteward. I pray tell that example. She ſaid—I will gladly; but I fear you will hear me no more; for next day the Seventh Maſter ſhall ſpeak, and ſave your ſon from death as the other ſix have done; and when your ſon ſhall ſpeak, of whoſe words you ſhall have ſuch joy and delectation, that the love betwixt us ſhall be wholly forgotten. The Emperor ſaid—That is impoſſible, for I ſhall never forget your love.

Then ſaid ſhe—My beſt beloved Lord, if it pleaſe you, I will tell you one example by which you ſhall beware of many perils, eſpecially of your accurſed ſon, who intendeth to deſtroy me by his Maſters. The Emperor ſaid—Tell on: and the Empreſs began to tell as hereafter followeth.

The ſeventh Example of the Empreſs.

THERE was a king which loved his wife above all things, inſomuch that he cloſed her within a ſtrong caſtle, and bare the keys thereof himſelf: the lady was therefore heavy and comfortleſs. Now in far countries there was

was a valiant knight, which lying on his bed dreamed he ſaw one of the faireſt queens that ever eye beheld, whoſe love above all others he deſired to obtain, and if he might ſee her walk he ſhould certainly have ſome knowledge of her, by whom to him great friendſhip and honour ſhould come. To the queen, the ſame night, by viſion of the ſame knight, the like was alſo ſhewed, aud as yet they had no knowledge of each other, neither of name or fame. When the knight had thus dreamed, and ſeen (as he thought) a moſt virtuous and comely lady, he determined that his foot ſhould take no reſt till he had found out the lady, that in his dream ſeemed ſo glorious. And having took horſe, and all that was neceſſary for his journey, he travelled throughout divers regions, countries, and kingdoms, till at laſt he came into the land where this queen was by her jealous huſband kept in a ſtrong caſtle. When this knight was come unto the city, and and had for a ſeaſon therein ſojourned, it fell out, that as the knight walked by the caſtle, (and knew not as then that the queen was therein kept) ſhe was at that time ſitting in the window to ſee the people paſs by, and amongſt others, ſhe eſpied the knight and knew him to be the man of whom ſhe had dreamed before. The knight by chance lifted up his eyes, and perceived a lady in a window, and his mind gave him, that it was ſhe of whom he had dreamed, and ſhe began a ſong in love. As he heard that, he was taken

with her love. That knight from henceforth daily walked about the caſtle beholding it all over, to eſpy if any way he might get in, to declare his mind unto her. The lady perceiving that, preſently endited a letter, and ſecretly conveyed it unto him from the caſement of her chamber window, which when he had pe-

ruſed, and underſtanding the will of the lady, he began to haunt juſts and tournaments, and and did perform ſo many marvellous acts, that the fame of him came to the ears of the King. And as ſoon as the king heard thereof, he ſent after him, and ſaid unto him—Sir knight, I have heard that you have got much honour at our juſts and tournaments; wherefore if it pleaſe you to abide here and dwell with us, we ſhall give you a large reward. The knight

anſwer-

anſwered, O! mighty prince, I am your ſervant, I would I could do any ſervice that would pleaſe your magnificence, without taking any reward, ſave one thing before all other I deſire. The king ſaid—Shew unto me boldly what that is. The knight anſwered—My lord, ſeeing that it hath pleaſed your moſt excellent Majeſty to take me for your ſervant, and one of your grave counſel, it ſeemeth to me moſt expedient for both our delights, that I have a place near the wall of the caſtle, that I at all times might be more ready at your call, when you need. The king anſwered—I conſent, make it as you think beſt. Then the knight cauſed many workmen to be brought, and having ſo done, he choſe out certain for his purpoſe, and cauſed them to build him a fair lodging near the walls of the tower. This being finiſhed, he made a covenant with one of the workmen, (whom he thought fitteſt) to make a ſecret way to the queen's lodgings. And when this was finiſhed, he killed the work-man, becauſe he ſhould not make it known. Having thus done, he went in unto the queen, and did her reverence as became him, and they diſcourſed of many matters. Having thus paſſed the day, the night drawing on, he deſired he might ſleep by her one night, but ſhe often denied him; yet nevertheleſs conſented unto his requeſt. Now they having ſpent the night in pleaſure, and morning being come, the knight returned to his lodgings, and the queen began to think with herſelf—What

ſhall I do, if I ſhould make my huſband acquainted herewith? Two evils would come thereof; the one is my ſhame, and peradventure he would utterly forſake me, and cauſe me to be driven out of the land for ever. The other is, that he would ſlay the knight, for death it is not poſſible for him to eſcape; therefore I think it more expedient to be ſecret therein, than to reveal it. After that, the knight, as often as it pleaſed him, went in unto the queen, and did his will with her; and ſhe gave him a ring which the king had given her at her wedding. This knight was ſo famous in juſting, that in every battle and tournament he had the victory: for which cauſe he was in great favour with the king, ſo that he made him ſteward and governor over all his land.

It happened on a day, that the king diſpoſed to ride a hunting, and commanded his ſteward to be ready on the morrow to go with him: whereupon he offered himſelf willingly. On the morrow they entered the foreſt, all day chacing the wild beaſts, and were ſo weary that the king ſat down by a fountain to reſt, and the knight by his ſide. the knight was no ſooner ſet, but he fell aſleep by the king, having the ring on his finger which the queen had given him; which the king perceiving knew it well. When the knight awaked, and found the king had ſeen the ring, he feigned himſelf to be ſore ſick, and ſaid—My honoured Lord, I feel myſelf ſo ſick, that if I do not haſte me

unto

unto my lodging, and ſeek out ſome preſent remedy, either by phyſic or ſome other courſe, I am but a dead man, therefore I pray you give me leave to go home. To whom the king made this anſwer—Go, dear friend, in the name of God, and ſee there be nothing wanting to procure thy health, that my court or kingdom can afford. The king had no ſooner ended his ſpeech, but immediately the knight took leave, and getting upon his horſe, he haſted to his houſe, and as ſoon as he was come home he alighted, and haſted to the queen's lodgings, and gave her the ring again, and told her withal how the king had eſpied it upon his finger, when they were both ſat down to reſt: he alſo told her, that he feigned himſelf to be very ſick, for which cauſe the king gave him leave to return to his lodgings; and he prayed her that if the king at any time ſhould call for the ring ſhe ſhould ſhew it unto him. This done, he departed, and went again unto his lodging. Not long after, the king came home to the queen, and ſhe received him right lovingly; and after a little time had paſſed, the king ſaid unto her—My renowned Lady, ſhew me the ring that I gave you, for I have a great deſire to ſee it. She anſwered—O my beſt beloved Lord, why at this time do you deſire to ſee it? Then ſaid he—If you ſhew it not to me incontinently, it ſhall repent you. Then ſhe aroſe, and went to her cabinet, and took the ring out of it; and having thus done, ſhe brought it to her huſband, and when he had

ſeen it, he was half aſhamed, and ſaid—My beſt beloved queen, O how like is that knight's ring unto this, which I ſaw upon his finger! for I thought it had been mine, and that was the cauſe I did aſk ſo haſtily for it. And of this ſuſpicion I yield myſelf guilty, my dear lady, in this behalf: the ſtrength of the tower deceived me, for I thought none could get therein but myſelf alone, in regard none had the keeping of the keys but myſelf. She ſaid unto him—My dear lord, wonder not, for one ring may be like another, and workmen ſeldom make one piece of work but others make the ſame; but God forgive you in that you have ſuſpected me; for you know the ſtrength of the tower, and the keys you have always in your preſence, and truſt no man therewith. After that, the knight ordained a great dinner, and ſaid unto the king—My ſovereign, my lady and love is come from out of my country to ſeek me, for whoſe ſake I have ordained a dinner, and would intreat your highneſs to do me the honour, to dine with me this day, and take ſuch meat as ſhall be provided. The king anſwered—Moſt willingly will I do you that worſhip, and more. The knight was glad thereof, and by his ſecret way went unto the queen, and ſaid to her—My beloved lady, you muſt do thus: come to my houſe the private way, and cloathe yourſelf richly, and deck yourſelf with jewels and other ornaments, according to the cuſtom of my country; then ſhall you ſit at table with my king, as my ſo-

vereign

vereign lady, and make good cheer. She replied—Sir knight, I am ready to do according to your desire. When the time appointed was near, and the king coming from the castle towards the knight's house, in the mean time, by the secret way, the queen entered the knight's lodgings, before the king could come, and apparelled herself after the manner of the knight's country. When the king entered the house, she with courtly salutations received him; and when the king had beheld her, he demanded of the knight what woman she should be that seemed so fair? Then answered the knight—My renowned lord, it is my sovereign lady, that for the love she beareth me, is come out of my country after me to know why I should absent myself so long from her love and service. The speeches being ended, the knight caused the queen to sit down at the table, and made the queen sit by him. The king thought it was his queen, and said within himself—O how like is this woman unto my wife! So the strength of the tower still deceived him, that he gave more credit unto the knight's words than to his own eyes. The queen began to talk to the king, and for to stir him to eat and drink, and make good cheer. And as the king heard the voice, he said unto himself—O blessed Lord, how like is this woman to my queen, in her behaviour, speech, visage, and in all other conditions! And still the strength of the tower deceived him. In the end of the feast, the knight prayed his beloved lady to

ſing before the king, and ſhe began to ſing a ſong of love. When the king heard her, he knew her voice, and thought unto himſelf—Is not this my wife? And yet how can this be? I having the keys of the tower myſelf in keeping! So all dinner time the king ſat debating thus with himſelf. Dinner ended, he urged the knight forthwith to take up the table, he having great occaſions that moved him thereunto, for he was ſore troubled in mind: upon which the knight ſaid—My Lord, what is the reaſon you are ſo melancholy? What is it that diſcontenteth you? Be not troubled: if it pleaſe you we ſhall make you ſome pleaſant ſport. And the gentlewoman ſaid—My beloved Lord, if it pleaſe you with us to abide, we ſhall make you all the delight that this place can afford: if your queen herſelf was here, ſhe could not give you more content. Whereupon, the king began to be angry, and ſaid—Take away the table, for I may no longer abide here, until that I have reſolved my mind. Thereupon, the knight ſtraightway obeyed the king, and took up the table, giving thanks to all, but eſpecially to the king his ſovereign lord and maſter.

Now the king departed, and went with all haſte into the caſtle, to ſee whether his queen was therein; but in the mean time, ſhe went in at the private door, and ſtripped off her uppermoſt veſture, and put herſelf into the ſame habit the king left her attired with. When the king entered therein, he found the queen

in

in the ſame cloathing he had left her in before; and ſeeing all fell out contrary to his expectation, he kindly embraced her, and ſaid to her, This day have I eaten with my knight, and his fair lady, who came out of her country to my court to find him out, who being met, and overjoyed at the ſight of her, did ſoon prepare a great feaſt, and humbly intreated me to do him ſo much grace as to accompany him at the feaſt. Whereupon, I anſwered him—that for the love I did bear him, I would do him the honour, and much more, if requeſted; whom I having beheld, ſhe ſeemed to me ſo fair, that ſince I was born, mine eyes have not ſeen one ſo like as ſhe is to you, inſomuch that all dinner-time I was troubled with many matters, and could hardly endure unto the end of the feaſt, but that I muſt come to ſee whether you were here.

Then the queen anſwered him, O mighty king, wherefore do you miſtruſt me, having often found the contrary? Do you not know that this tower is ſo faſt and ſtrong that no man can enter in or out without your knowledge? for you always keep the keys, and will not truſt any therewith; how then is it poſſible I ſhould be there? You may find one man like another: you remember of late how you did miſtake the knight's ring; and have you more arguments of ſuſpicion againſt me? Was it not ſufficient to debar me of liberty theſe many years, but you muſt needs be jealous beſides? I tell you, O noble king, if you do

not forſake your jealouſy, and releaſe me out of impriſonment before three days be expired, I will end my days herein; for I had rather live a ſervant at liberty, than a queen in priſon. The king anſwered—All that you have objected to is true, of which I acknowledge myſelf guilty; wherefore have patience for a few days, and as ſure as I reign King of this country, I will ſet you at liberty: and ſo he lovingly embraced her with a kiſs, and returned to his lodgings. Now he had not reſted above two days, but the knight came and ſaid unto the king--O my honourable Lord, I have long ſerved your highneſs; now it is time I return into my own country; and for all the ſervice that I have done unto you, I deſire nothing but this one thing before my departure; which is to give to me, before the prieſt, with your own hand, in the church, my beloved lady whom I intend to wed, who followed me out of far countries for love, and whom I ſhall bring thither again, as my true and lawful wife, which will be to my great honour when I come into my country. The king anſwered —That petition, and more than that, (if you deſire it) will I gladly fulfil. Then the king fixed the day of marriage. When the good king came to church honourably attended, the prieſt was ready (adorned with his veſtments) to ſolemnize the matrimony. The knight apparelled the queen in his own houſe, after the manner of his own country, and ordained two knights to lead her to the church, who be-

lieved

lieved it had been his paramour. When they were come to the church, the priest said—Who shall give this woman to this knight? The king said--I shall give her unto her own knight; and took her by the hand, and said—O good woman, you are so like my queen, that my love is to you the greater, and also, because you shall be wedded to this knight whom I esteem above all men, and he shall be of my house: and so put the queen's hand into the knight's; and the priest, after the order of the church, bound them, and wedded them together in true and faithful wedlock. When all these rites were finished, the knight said unto the king—O most noble Lord, the ship that I intend to go in towards my country is now furnished for my journey, and ready to sail away; wherefore I humbly beseech your noble grace to accompany my beloved wife thereunto, and that you would admonish her to love me, and have me in favour above all others living, and so much the rather for your good counsel. The king, with his followers, (besides others) did accompany them unto the ship; for whose departure many were exceeding sorrowful and heavy. Then the king began to say unto the queen—My dear friend, hearken well unto my counsel, and see that ye follow it, for it shall be to your profit: my most honoured and beloved knight hath now wedded and done to you all the honour that in him is; wherefore look that you love, honour, and obey him above all other men, as God hath

hath commanded, and that you be unto him true in your dealings. As ſoon as this ſpeech was ended, he delivered her unto the knight, ſaying—My bleſſing be with you both, and our Lord keep and convey you ſafely unto your own country. Then the knight and the queen bowed their heads to the king, and gave him thanks for all the kindneſſes that he had done them: and having ſo done, they committed him to the Almighty, and entered into the ſhip: the mariners hoiſted ſail before the wind, and within a ſhort ſpace the king loſt ſight of the ſhip; and then going haſtily into the caſtle, he went to ſeek for his queen, and when he could not find her, he was moved over all the parts of his body, and ſought over all the tower ſo long, till at laſt he found out the hole that the knight had cauſed to be made: and when he ſaw that, he wept bitterly, and cried out—Alas! alas! this knight in whom I had ſo great confidence, hath robbed me of my wife! Was I not a fool, that gave more faith unto the words of a knight than to my own eyes?

Then ſaid the Empreſs—My Lord, have you underſtood what I have ſaid? The Emperor ſaid—As well as may be. Then anſwered the Empreſs—Remember how he truſted the knight, and yet the knight deceived him: in like manner do you truſt the Seven Wiſe Maſters, who labour to deſtroy me your wife, and you give more credit to their words than to your own eyes; for you have ſeen how your ungra-

ungracious ſon hath rent and ſcratched me, whereof yet I bear tokens and marks about me, as you may ſee; alſo you know well how your accurſed ſon hath ſhamed me, and you mark not how they defend him in this folly: therefore it is to be feared that it will happen to you worſe than to the king of whom I have ſpoken unto you.

The Emperor replied—I will believe mine own eyes before I will give credence to their words, and therefore to-morrow I ſhall do juſtice upon my ſon. The next day the Emperor commanded his ſon to be brought before him; which being done, he commanded him to be led to the place of execution, there to ſuffer death according to the law. Then there began to ariſe great noiſe and bewailing amongſt the common people, for the death of the Emperor's only ſon. At laſt when the ſeventh Maſter heard it, he ran immediately unto the officers which were leading him to the gallows, and ſaid—My friends, I pray you not to make over much haſte, but ſtay your hands awhile; for I think this day (with the help of the Almighty God) to ſave him from all perils. And from thence the Maſter haſted him to the Emperor's palace, and bid him reverence according to his accuſtomed duty? but the Emperor with great indignation made him this anſwer—Never more have you any joy in this world, for that you have ſent my ſon home untaught and dumb, whom I delivered unto you well ſpeaking; for which cauſe you ſhall be all put to

death

death with him. The Maſter anſwered—O moſt noble Emperor, the time is not ſo long betwixt this and to-morrow noon; then (by the grace of God) you ſhall hear him ſpeak diſcreetly, and ſhall declare the truth of all things, and this I promiſe you he will peform to the full, upon pain of my life, if you will ſpare him ſo long time: if you find it not ſo, then take my life, and the lives of us all. Then ſaid the Emperor—If I might but hear my ſon ſpeak, it would give me ſufficient content, and I would not deſire longer to live. Then anſwered the Maſter—All this and more you ſhall ſee, and confeſs it to be true, if you will but abide this little time, and then the ſtrife that hath betwixt us and the Empreſs will be clearly decided. And if you ſuffer him to be put to death through the words of your ungodly wife, I tell you of a truth it ſhall happen worſe to you than it did to a knight that died for a little blood that he ſaw his wife to bleed, to whom afterwards ſhe was moſt unnatural. Then ſaid the Emperor—That example would I fain hear. Then ſaid the Maſter—Let your ſon be called again, and I ſhall tell you ſo notable an example, that during your life you may beware of the unſtableneſs of women. Then the Emperor ſaid—I ſhall go call my ſon again, upon condition, that to morrow I ſhall hear him ſpeak as you have promiſed. The Maſter ſaid—Do that my Lord, for it ſhall be ſo, and began to tell as followeth.

The

The Example of the Seventh Maſter.

THERE was a knight that had a fair young wife, whom he loved entirely, ſo that he could not be out of her ſight. It happened on a time that they played together at cheſs, and the knight by chance had a knife in his hand, and ſhe fortuned to ſmite her hand on the knife, ſo that a little blood began to appear. When the knight ſaw his wife bleed, he fell to the ground in a ſwoon: his wife ſeeing that, caſt cold water on his face, inſomuch that he came a little to himſelf, and ſaid, lightly—Call the curate with the holy ſacrament, for I muſt die; for the blood that I have ſeen come from your finger hath ſmitten death to my heart: then the prieſt came, and comforted him much, and adminiſtered the ſacrament unto him, and anon he died; for whoſe death there was great ſorrow, eſpecially by his wife. Alſo, after the obſequies were finiſhed, ſhe went and lay upon his grave, and there made great lamentation, and ſaid—ſhe would never depart thence, but as a turtle dove ſhe would, for the love of her huſband, there abide and die. Then went her friends and neighbours unto her, and ſaid—What availeth this for his ſoul, to live here weeping until you die? It is better that you go home, and there give alms for the love of God, and that ſhall more avail your ſoul, than in this place to abide. To whom ſhe anſwered—I

pray

pray you hold your peace: you are evil counſellors. Conſider ye not how I am from him ſeparated by death, for a little blood he ſaw come out of my finger? Therefore I ſhall never from hence depart.

Her friends hearing that, made her a little houſe near the grave, and putting therein all things neceſſary, went their ways, thinking within a while ſhe ſhould be weary to be alone, and ſo deſolate from all company, and thereby deſire again the company of the people.

In the city was then a law, That if a criminal was hanged, the ſheriff all night ſhould watch the dead body armed: and if it happened that the body were ſtolen, the ſheriff was to be deprived of his lands and life at the pleaſure of the king. It happened, ſoon after the knight was dead, that a man ſhould be hanged for treſpaſſing, ſo that the ſheriff all that night watched by the gallows, not far from the city, and the church-yard was not far from the ſame: then began the ſheriff to be ſo cold, that he could not poſſibly endure it, but was ready to die, except he might ſpeedily warm him, it was ſo great a froſt; and by chance eſpying a fire in the church-yard, he haſted and came to it, and when he was come near thereto, he knocked at the little houſe. The woman ſaid, Who at this time knocketh at the houſe of the ſorrowful woman? He anſwered—I am the ſheriff that hath endured much cold, and am ready to freeze to death, unleſs without delay you let me warm myſelf. She ſaid unto him—

I fear

I fear if that I let you in, ye ſhould cauſe me to be more heavy. He ſaid—I promiſe you, that I ſhall ſay no words to your diſpleaſure. Then ſhe let him in; and when he had ſat a while by the fire, and was well warmed, he ſaid unto her—O, fair woman, with your licence, would I fain ſpeak but one word with you. She anſwered—Sir, ſay what pleaſeth you. Then he ſaid—O Lady, you be a fair gentlewoman, rich and young, were it not more convenient for you to dwell at home, and to give alms, than to waſte yourſelf here with weeping? She ſaid—Sir knight, had I known this before, you had not come in; for I ſay to you, as I have ſaid to others oftentimes, you know my huſband loved me ſo well, that for a little blood he ſaw come out of my finger, he is dead; wherefore I will here die for the love of him. As the knight heard this, he took leave, and went again unto the gallows; and when he was come thither, and ſaw that the thief which he left hanging was ſtolen away, he began to wax heavy, and ſaid—Woe is me!—What ſhall I do? for I have loſt my life, and all my goods! And going up and down thus full of ſorrow, he knew not what way to turn himſelf; at laſt, he concluded to go to the deſolate lady, and ſhew her the heavineſs of his heart, to wit if ſhe could give him any good counſel. When he was come thither, he called, and ſhe aſked him the cauſe. He ſaid—Madam, I am the ſheriff that was juſt now with you, and I would fain ſhew you the ſecrets

crets of my heart, therefore I pray you open the door. And he went in, and ſaid unto her, O moſt virtuous lady, I am now come to have your advice; for you know the laws of the land are, that when any man is hanged, and ſtolen off the gallows, the ſheriff's life and goods are in the king's hands: now it happened while I was here, and warmed me, the thief was ſtolen; therefore I pray, fair Lady, for the love of God, give me your beſt advice what to do. She anſwered—I have compaſſion upon you, for by the law you have loſt your life and goods to the king, do now after my counſel, and ye ſhall loſe neither. He anſwered—I am to you greatly bound, hoping to have good comfort. She ſaid—Will you then promiſe to make me your wife? The knight anſwered—Would to God you were indeed ſo minded; but I fear you diſdain to humble yourſelf unto ſo poor a knight. She ſaid—I give you my will there; and he gave her again his will, and conſented to be her knight during his life. Then ſaid ſhe—You know on ſuch a day my Lord was buried, who for the love of me died; take him out of the ſepulchre, and hang him up inſtead of the thief. The knight anſwered—Lady, your counſel is very good; then went they and opened the ſepulchre, and drew him out. The knight anſwered unto the Lady—How ſhall we now do, becauſe ere the thief was hanged, two of his teeth were ſmitten out, and I fear me if that were perceived, I ſhall die the death. Then the lady ſaid—

Take

Take a ſtone and ſtrike out two of his teeth. The knight anſwered—Madam, that may not I do; for while he lived he was my truſty friend, and it ſhould be to me great rebuke to do ſo diſloyal a deed to his body, being dead. She anſwered—For your love I ſhall do it, and preſently took a ſtone and ſmote out two of his teeth, and ſaid to the ſheriff—Take him and hang him upon the gallows like the thief. The knight ſaid—I fear to do it, for the thief when he was taken was wounded upon his head, and he lacked his ears. O Madam, God forbid that I do ſo to the dead body that I loved ſo well in his life. Then ſaid ſhe, Give me your ſword, and I ſhall for your love do it: ſo taking the ſword, ſhe ſmote a manly ſtroke

on the forehead, and cut off his ears; and when

when ſhe had thus done, ſhe ſaid—Now hang him. Then the knight anſwered—Yet I fear to hang him; for the thief wanted both his ſtones, and if he be ſearched and not found without, all my labour is loſt. Then ſaid ſhe —I never ſaw man ſo fearful, ſeeing the matter is ſo ſure: take a knife and cut off his ſtones. And he anſwered—That I may not do in any wiſe, and therefore I pray you ſpare me, for I know what a man is without his ſtones. She ſaid, For the love of you I ſhall do it, and took the knife and cut off her huſband's ſtones, and ſaid—Now take the churl thus disfigured, and hang him up without dread: and they went both and hung the body upon the gallows and ſo the ſheriff was delivered. Then ſaid the lady—Now ye are delivered from all dangers by my counſel, therefore I deſire you (according to promiſe) that ye wed me. The knight ſaid—I have made a vow that I ſhall never wed other ſo long as I live, which I ſhall perform. Then he ſaid—O thou moſt ſhameful and worſt of all women, who would take thee to wife? An honourable and loving knight was thy huſband, who for a little blood that he ſaw iſſue out of thy finger died. Now haſt thou ſmitten out two of his teeth, cut off his ears and ſtones, and made a great wound in his head. What devil would marry thee?—Therefore thou ſhalt never ſhame good man more, I will rid thee of thy life. And drew his ſword, and with one ſtroke ſmote off her head.

Then

Then the Maſter ſaid unto the Emperor—My Lord, have you underſtood what I have ſaid? He anſwered—Right well: amongſt all women this was the worſt, and the knight rewarded her accordingly, that ſhe ſhould no more do ſhame. The Emperor ſaid—Moreover, good Maſter, might I but hear my ſon ſpeak, I ſhould have no care of myſelf. Then ſaid the Maſter—To-morrow you ſhall hear him ſpeak, and he ſhall ſhew the truth of all the variances betwixt us and the Empreſs, as I hope. And ſo he took leave of the Emperor, and departed.

How DIOCLESIAN, *the* Emperor's *Son, complained of the* Empreſs, *and how he excuſed himſelf to her Complaint.*

AFTER that, all the Maſters took counſel how they ſhould bring the child out of priſon, and lead him to the palace; ſo they went to the child in priſon before mid-day, his counſel to hear. To whom the child ſaid—What you will, ſhall pleaſe; but buſy not yourſelves how I ſhall anſwer, or what I ſhall ſay; for with joy I ſhall anſwer all that may be demanded of me. When the Seven Wiſe Maſters heard that, they were exceeding joyful, and cloathed him in purple and cloth of gold; and two of the Maſters went before him, one on his right hand, and another on his

his left, and the other three followed him, and before all went twelve men with inſtruments of muſick, who brought him with great melody to the palace. When the Emperor heard the melody, he demanded what it was? Then it was told him by the by-ſtanders, ſaying—Mighty Emperor, it is your ſon which cometh before you, and before all your Lords, to ſpeak and excuſe himſelf of all that is laid to his charge. The Emperor ſaid—That is good tidings, if I might hear my ſon ſpeak. And when the child was come into the palace, he rode to his father, and ſaid unto him—Hail, my moſt dear and royal father.

And when the Emperor heard the voice of his ſon, he was ſo glad, that for joy he fell to the earth; but his ſon haſted to take up his father again: and when he came to himſelf, then began the ſon to declare the whole matter to his father. And there came ſo great a multitude to the palace to hear the child ſpeak and the noiſe of them was ſo great that the child could not be heard. The Emperor conſidering that, cauſed money to be thrown into the ſtreets, that the people therewith ſhould be buſied out of the palace, the better to hear the child ſpeak: but they regarded not the money. When the Emperor perceived that he commanded ſilence on pain of death; and when they were all ſtill, he began to ſpeak as followeth—O moſt dear father, before I ſpeak any thing, I entreat you that the Empreſs, with all her chamber-maids, may be preſent.

So

So the Emperor commanded the Empreſs with all her maids to come without delay. The Empreſs hearing that, in great fear, came with her maids; and the child had them to ſtand before the people on a row, that he might ſee them. Then ſaid the child—Sir, behold the chamber-maid that ſtandeth there in green, (whom ye know the Empreſs loveth above all others) command her to be uncloathed before us all, and ſee what ſhe is. The Emperor ſaid—Dear ſon, that would ſhame us all, to have a woman ſtand naked before us. He

ſaid—If it be a woman it is my ſhame; if not, let the ſhame abide in her. When ſhe was uncloathed, ſhe appeared to be a man, whereat they wondered.

The Complaint of the Emperor's *Son on the* Empreſs.

THEN ſaid the ſon unto the father—Behold this ribauld hath many a night lain with your wife in your chamber, and hath defiled your bed, and him the Empreſs loved above all others, which thing you did not know.

When the Emperor had ſeen theſe things, he with great indignation gave oommand, that the Empreſs and ribauld ſhould be burnt: but the ſon anſwered—My Lord and father, make no haſte to give judgment, till I have reproved her for the grievous ſlanders ſhe did falſely accuſe me of, and declared how unjuſtly ſhe hath complained of me, and ſought all means how to take my life. Then ſaid the Emperor, My dear ſon, I commit all the judgment into your hands, The ſon anſwered—If ſhe be found a liar, the law ſhall give ſentence againſt her; but my royal father, when you ſent for me, at her earneſt requeſt, then I with my Maſters beheld the ſtars, by which I perceived, that if I ſhould have ſpoken unto you, or any living creature, within the ſpace of ſeven days, I ſhould have died a moſt ſhameful death, and for that cauſe only I did forbear to ſpeak until this preſent.

And whereas the Empreſs moſt unjuſtly hath accuſed me, that I would have raviſhed her, therein ſhe lieth falſly; for ſhe moſt adulte-

rouſly

rouſly provoked me to defile the bed of my moſt gracious Lord and father the Emperor. And when ſhe in no wiſe could bring me thereto, ſhe took pen, ink, and paper, and bade me write the cauſe wherefore I would not yield. And when I had written the cauſe thereof, and how I would not my father's orchard defile, then ſhe began to tear her cloaths and ſcratch her viſage, ſo that it guſhed forth with blood, and cried with a loud voice—This your ſon (having a mind full of luſt) would have wronged your princely bed, and I reſiſting his luſts, moſt inhumanely hath he torn my fleſh. When the Emperor heard this, he beheld her with a full countenance, and ſaid in this manner—O wretched woman! was not thy ribauld ſufficient to ſatisfy thy letcherous appetite, but wanted to criminate my ſon? Then fell the Empreſs at the Emperor's feet, and cried for mercy. The Emperor ſaid—O thou curſed and unhappy woman! thou aſkeſt forgiveneſs, but are worthy of none, for thou haſt deſerved to die in three reſpects. Firſt, in that thou haſt committed adultery—Secondly, in that thou moſt laſciviouſl yhaſt provoked my ſon to a moſt abominable ſin, and laid the crime falſly upon him.—Laſtly, in that thou haſt every day incited me by thy cunning tales to put my ſon to death: therefore the law muſt have its courſe againſt thee, and condemn thee to death which thou haſt deſerved.

Then anſwered his ſon--Moſt noble father, you know how that for her leaſings I was daily led to hanging: But my Maſters with the help of God hath delivered me. O my moſt honourable lord and father, it was told you by the Empreſs, that I ſhould alſo (by the help of my Maſters) depoſe you: and that I did labour by all means to deſtroy you, and to ſit in your throne; Would you not then have much grieved? Have you not the whole command and government of this your kingdom? Wherefore then ſhould not I uſe all the ſkill I have, to help you, my moſt honoured father, rather than any way to deſtroy you? And ſeeing from you I have my living, I will repute you my ſovereign lord and father, during my life, and not in any manner deprive you of your honour, but concern myſelf about governing the ſame, and all your commands I ſhall fulfil: But it is as the father that caſt his ſon into the ſea to drown him, becauſe he ſaid he ſhould live to be a greater lord than his father was, and yet the ſon by providence was ſaved, and became greater than his father, and yet was no hindrance to him, but profited them much. Alſo you ſee, that my life and carriage is never like to hinder you, but ſhall be your comfort. Then ſaid the Emperor--Bleſſed be the Almighty God, and the hour I begat thee, and deſired ſuch a ſon, that I find ſo expert in all things. Tell me an example, by which we may perfectly underſtand the wiſdom, and my heart the better to enjoy thee.

Then

Then ſaid the ſon—Honourable father, command firſt ſilence to be made, that I be not interrupted till I have done: and when that is ended, give ſentence according to law upon me and the Empreſs. Then commanded the Emperor ſilence, and the child began to tell in ample manner, thus.

The Example of DIOCLESIAN *the* Emperor's *Son.*

THERE was a knight which had but one ſon, that he loved right dear in the beginning, as ye have loved me, whom he delivered to a Maſter that dwelt in a far country, to be brought up in learning and knowledge. This ſon, as he waxed in years, increaſed in wiſdom and underſtanding very much; and when he had been with his Maſter ſeven years, his father deſired to ſee him, and gave orders that he ſhould come again into his country and viſit his friends, as you ſent for me. The ſon was obedient to his father, and came; at whoſe coming he was joyous, for that he had grown in comelineſs of body as much as in doctrine and underſtanding, and to every man appeared pleaſant and gentle.

It happened upon a day, as the father and mother were ſitting at dinner, and the child was ſerving them, a nightingale came before

the window where they ſat, and began to ſing ſo charming that they wondered: and the knight ſaid—O how ſweetly this bird ſingeth!

Happy were he that could underſtand his ſong, and ſhew the interpretation thereof. Then ſaid the ſon—My honoured father, the ſong of this bird I can declare, but I fear your diſpleaſure. The father ſaid—Say without fear, my ſon, the interpretaion of the bird, and ye ſhall prove whether I be angry or not, but I ſhall mark the cauſe of my anger. When the ſon heard that he ſaid—The nightingale ſaid in her ſong—That I ſhall become a great Lord, honoured of every man, and of my father, who ſhall bring me water to waſh, and my mother ſhall hold the towel. The father ſaid—Thou ſhalt never have ſuch ſervice of us, nor

ſuch

ſuch dignity ſhall follow thee, and in great madneſs he took his ſon upon his ſhoulders, and ran to the ſea, and caſt him in, and ſaid—Lie there, interpreter. The child could ſwim, and ſwimming to ſhore, where he was four days, without meat or drink: the fifth day there came a ſhip, and as the child ſaw that, he called to the men, and ſaid—For God's ſake deliver me from death. They ſaw it was a fair young man, and had compaſſion on him, and with the boat fetched him on board; and carried him into a far country, and diſpoſed of him to a duke. He grew very proper and fair, and the duke reſpected him, and had him much in favour.

Upon a time, the king of that country aſſembled the great Lords and Noblemen within the realm together, to ſit in council: this duke then prepared to go to the ſaid council; and giving great regard to the wiſdom of the youth, took him with him. And when they were met before the king and his council—My truſty Lords and friends, ſaid the king, do you know the cauſe wherefore I have occaſioned you to meet? they anſwered—We are, ſovereign Lord, at your command. Then ſaid the king, it is a ſecret that I will ſhew you: if any man can make known what it ſignifieth I ſwear unto him by my crown, to give him my daughter in marriage, and he ſhall be my partner in the realm ſo long as I live, and after my death, poſſeſs the kingdom; and the myſtery is this:

Three ravens follow me ſtill wherefoever I go, crying out with ſuch horrible voices, that the pain is grievous for me to hear them, and much more to ſee their faces; wherefore, if there be any man which knoweth the cauſe of this their earneſt ſeeking after me, and can ſhew what they mean by their crying, and hinder them from purſuing me, without doubt I will make good my promiſe: and when the king had thus ſaid, there was none found among them that underſtood the cauſe, or that could drive away the ravens: then ſaid the child unto the duke—My Lord, think you the king will perform what he hath promiſed?—Will you, ſaid the duke, that I give the king knowledge of what you can do? Then the child ſaid—I do ſtake my life to make good what I have ſaid. When the duke heard that, he went unto the king, and ſaid, My Lord and King, here is a young man that doth promiſe to ſatisfy you in all that you deſire touching theſe ravens, if you will perform what you have promiſed. The king ſwore by the crown of his kingdom, that which he had promiſed ſhould be performed: then he brought the child before the king, and when the king ſaw him, he ſpake unto him after this manner:—O fair child, can you anſwer this my queſtion? The child anſwered—Yea, my Lord, and that in the beſt manner. Your queſtion is, Wherefore the ravens follow you, and horribly call upon you? To which I anſwer—It happened that there were two ravens, a male and female,

that

that brought out between them a third raven; and in that place there was a great famine and ſcarcity of all manner of food, that men, beaſts, and fowls, died for want. Now the third raven was at that time very young, and not able to fly abroad to get her living: the female left it, ſeeking how ſhe might provide for herſelf, and came no more to the feaſt; the male ſeeing that, with great penury and fatigue fed the young raven till he was able to fly; and when the dearth was gone, the female raven returned home again to the young one, and wanted to accompany him, but the male ſeeing that endeavoured to drive her away, ſaying—She in his great neceſſity left his company, and therefore now he did not care to aſſociate with her. She ſaid—That ſhe had in his hatching great pain and ſorrow, and ſuffered much penury, and for that cauſe ſhe preferred his company to the male.

For this cauſe, my ſovereign Lord, they purſue you, aſking which of them are to accompany the young raven; and this is the cauſe of this great clamour that they often make unto you. But, my honoured Lord, when you have given ſentence, you will never more experience their crying. Then anſwered the king—Becauſe the female hath forſaken the young raven in his neceſſity, it is but juſt that ſhe ſhould not have his fellowſhip. And ſhe moreover ſays, that in hatching and bringing forth, ſhe had great pain and ſorrow, that ſignifieth not, for her pain was turned into joy,

as ſoon as ſhe ſaw the young raven come into the world: but in regard the male is the cauſe of the generation of every beaſt of the earth, and every fowl of the air; and alſo becauſe the young raven in his neceſſity was ſuſtained and fed by the male, therefore I conclude both for judgment and ſentence definitive, that the young raven ſhall abide with the male and not the female.

When the ravens heard that ſentence, with great noiſe and cry they flew up into the air, and were no more ſeen in all the region.

This done, the king demanded of the young man what his name was? He anſwered—I am called Alexander. Then ſaid the king—I will that you grant me one requeſt, which is, that from henceforth you take me and none other, for

for your father; for you ſhall have my daughter to wife, and the entire government and poſſeſſion of my realm. Young Alexander abode there with the king, and every man did exceedingly love him, for he began to haunt juſts and tourneys, wherein he won the prize before any other in Egypt, ſo that his peer was not to be found; neither was there ſo hard a queſtion put to him, but he made it known with the true ſenſe and meaning thereof.

At that time there was an Emperor named Titus, who excelled in courteſy and curioſity all other emperors, kings, and princes, in the world; inſomuch that ſuch fame flew over the univerſe of it, that whoſoever would profit in cunning, manners, or behaviour, muſt go to the Emperor's court. When Alexander heard thereof, he ſaid to the king—My moſt honourable Lord and father, you know that the world is full of fame of the Emperor, that it is very delectable to abide in his court; wherefore, if it pleaſe you, my renowned Lord and father, I would very gladly go to his court, that I may obtain more wiſdom, and grow more prompt in manners and behaviour than now I am. Whereupon, anſwered the king—It pleaſeth me right well; but take with you plenty of gold and ſilver, and other neceſſaries that you my honour there may ſave, and have alſo that which to you is moſt requiſite and neceſſary. And it ſeemeth unto me moſt expedient that before your departure you do marry my daughter.

Then anſwered Alexander—Will it pleaſe you, my Lord, to ſpare me at this time, and at my return I ſhall wed her with all honour unto her appertaining. The king anſwered—Since it is your will to go unto the Emperor's court, I give my conſent. Then Alexander took his leave of the king, and carried with him abundance of treaſure, and went to the Emperor's court, where, when he was come, with many attendants, he went before the Emperor, and fell upon his knees, and did him reverence.

The Emperor roſe from his ſeat imperial, and kiſſed him, and aſked whence, and what he was, and wherefore he was come? He anſwered—I am ſon and heir to the King of Egypt, and am come to ſerve your moſt high majeſty, if it pleaſe you to accept of me.—The Emperor ſaid, he was heartily welcome, and committed him to his ſteward, and made him his carver. The ſteward ordained him a fair chamber, and provided all things that were neceſſary to the ſame; and Alexander behaved himſelf ſo well, that in ſhort time he was in favour of all the people.

Not long after, came the king's ſon of France to ſerve the Emperor, and to learn good qualities and comely behaviour: him the Emperor received honourably, demanding his name; and of what kindred he was come? He anſwered—I am ſon to the King of France, and I have to name Lodowick your ſervant. Then ſaid the Emperor—I have made Alexan-

der

der my carver, and you ſhall be my cup-bearer, that always ye may ſerve at my table: and commanded the ſteward to aſſign him a lodging, whom he placed with Alexander. Theſe two were ſo like in ſtature, viſage, and condition, that hardly the one might be known from the other; but that Alexander was more cunning than Lodowick, for he was feminine and ſhame-faced: and theſe young men loved well.

The Emperor had only one daughter, named Florentine, right fair and gracious, that ſhould be his heir, whom he much loved: ſhe had a court and ſervants aſſigned. To her the Emperor every day accuſtomed to ſend from his table of his dainties, in token of his affection, by Alexander, inſomuch that the daughter began to have him greatly in her favour, becauſe of his wiſe and comely behaviour.

Upon a day, Alexander had ſuch buſineſs that he ſerved not at the table, nor any other in his room; Lodowick perceiving that, ſerved for him; and as ſoon as he had ſerved in his laſt ſervice upon his knee, the Emperor commanded him to bear a diſh to his daughter, as he was wont, thinking he was Alexander. Then Lodowick went to the Emperor's daughter, ſaluting her with great reverence, and ſet the meat before her; till then he had not ſeen her. She perceiving it was not Alexander, ſaid to him, What is your name? and whoſe ſon are you? He anſwered her—Madam, I am the king's ſon of France, and my name is Lodowick. She ſaid—I thank you for your pains,

and

and then he departed. In the mean time came Alexander to the table, and they performed their ſervice.

Dinner being done, Lodowick went to bed ſore ſick. Alexander perceiving that, went to his chamber, and ſaid unto him—O my beſt-beloved friend and fellow, how is it with you? And what is the cauſe of your infirmity? He anſwered—The cauſe I know not; but I am ſore ſick, and fear I cannot eſcape death. Alexander ſaid—The cauſe of your infirmity I know beſt; for to-day, as you gave the meat to the Emperor's daughter, ye beheld her beauty ſo fervently, that your heart was raviſhed

with her love. Whereupon he anſwered—O Alexander, all the phyſicians in the world could not more truly judge my ſickneſs, but I fear

fear it will be my death. Then ſaid Alexander—Be of good comfort, I will help you to my power; and forthwith went to a merchant and bought with his own money a fair cloth, ſet with precious ſtones, unknown to Lodowick, and preſented it in his behalf to the princeſs. As ſoon as ſhe beheld it, ſhe aſked, where he had that coſtly cloth? He ſaid—Madam, of the ſon of the moſt Chriſtian King of France, who ſendeth it you for your love: for he having but once beheld your princely face, is grown ſick even to death. Wherefore if you ſuffer him to periſh, you will never recover honour.

Then ſaid ſhe—Good Alexander, would you counſel me to loſe my virginity? God defend that! and be aſſured, that for ſuch meſſages you ſhall never win thanks of me: therefore go out of my ſight, and ſpeak no more thereof. When Alexander heard that, he did obeiſance, and departed.

The next day Alexander went again to the city, and brought a chaplet that was twice the value of the cloth, and went to the princeſs's chamber, and gave it her on the behalf of Lodowick. And when ſhe ſaw that coſtly gift, ſhe ſaid unto him—I marvel that ſo often you have ſeen and ſpoken with me, and have not done your own errand in ſpeaking for yourſelf but for another. Then anſwered he—O Madam, I have not done ſo, becauſe my birth is not to be compared to yours; alſo my heart was never ſo wounded: and he that hath a

good

good fellow is bound for to do him true fellowſhip. And therefore now, excellent princeſs, of your moſt abundant pity have compaſſion on him, and make him whole, that you have ſo ſore wounded, that it be not for ever laid to your cruelty and hardneſs of heart. She anſwered him—Go your way, for at this time I will give you no anſwer. And as he heard that, he departed.

And the third day he went to the city, and bought a girdle that was of more value, and richer than the chaplet was, and preſented it to her, in the behalf of Lodowick; and when ſhe beheld that gift ſo precious, ſhe ſaid unto Alexander, ſay to Lodowick, that he come to my chamber about the third hour in the night, and he ſhall find the door open; and Alexander hearing that, was glad, and went to his fellow, and ſaid—My beſt beloved friend, be of good comfort, for I have conquered the princeſs to you, and this night I ſhall bring thee to her chamber. When that was ſaid, he ſtarted up as though he had awaked out of his ſleep, and was well revived, and for great joy became quite recovered. The next night Alexander took Lodowick, and brought him to the chamber of the lady, with whom he was in ſolace all night. And from that time forth all her mind was upon him, ſo that there was but one love between them both.

And after that, Lodowick uſed many times to viſit her; ſo that in proceſs of time it came to the ears of the knights and gentlemen of the court,

court, how the Emperor's daughter was known by Lodowick: and they conſpired among themſelves how they might find and entrap him, ſo as to ſecure him. Alexander having information thereof, he warned him to withſtand them; and when the Knights underſtood that, they feared Alexander, and ſuffered his fellow to go in peace. Alexander many times put himſelf in jeopardy for him, he not knowing thereof, but the princeſs knew it well.

In ſhort time after, came letters to Alexander, of the death of the King of Egypt, that he ſhould haſtily come and receive his kingdom with honour and joy; and that ſhewed he unto the princeſs and to Lodowick, and alſo of his departing; wherefore they were ſorrowful. He ſaid alſo to the Emperor—My honourable lord, pleaſeth it you to underſtand, I have received letters of the death of my father, wherefore it behoveth me to go and receive the kingdom, and that you will be pleaſed to give me leave to depart; and for all the benefits to me done, I offer myſelf and all my goods; and rather that I ſhould by my going any way diſpleaſe you, my lord, I will forſake my realm, and abide with you ſtill.

Then ſaid the Emperor—Know you for certain, that for your departure I am right heavy; for you were the beſt ſervant in my court: but it becometh not an emperor to hinder his ſervants from their advancements, but rather to promote them to higher honour; therefore go you unto our treaſurer, and he ſhall deliver

you

you as much gold as you will have, and in the name of God and my bleſſing, go into your country. And thus Alexander had leave of the Emperor, and bade him farewel; and they were alſo ſorrowful for his departure, for he was beloved of all.

Lodowick, with the princeſs, brought him on his way ſeven miles at leaſt; after that, Alexander would not ſuffer them to go any farther. Then fell they both to the ground with great heavineſs: and Alexander took and lifted him up, and comforted him with fair words, and ſaid—O Lodowick, my beſt beloved fellow! I warn you that the ſecrets betwixt you and my lady, you hide as privily as you may, and take good heed to all things; for I wot another ſhould come and be in my ſtead, that ſhall envy you of the favour and grace that you ſtand in with the Emperor, and day and night ſhall lie in wait to take you in a fault, and to put you to rebuke. Then anſwered Lodowick, and ſaid—O Alexander, I ſhall beware as much as is poſſible: but how ſhall I do for want of your company? Therefore one thing I ſhall deſire of you, that you take this ring of me for a remembrance. Then ſaid he, I ſhall for the love of you, gladly receive your ring; and yet I ſhall never, without the ring, forget you: and ſo he committed them both to God. Then they embraced each other about the neck, kiſſed, and departed.

Not

Not long after, the king's ſon of Spain, named Guido, was received of the Emperor, in the room of Alexander; to whom the ſteward aſſigned Alexander's chamber, the which was very ſore againſt the will of Lodowick, but he could not help it.

Guido ſeeing that Lodowick was unwilling to lead him to his fellowſhip, he grew envious againſt him; ſo Lodowick for a long time, for fear of the ſame Guido, kept him from the company of the lady; nevertheleſs, afterwards being overcome with her love, ſometimes he went again unto her as before. Guido perceiving the ſame, waited ſo long therein, that he knew the truth, and was therefore certain, that the princeſs was by Lodowick known, and he had company with her.

Upon a time it happened that the Emperor ſtood in the hall, and praiſed Alexander for his gentleneſs and wiſdom. Guido hearing that, ſaid—My lord, he is not ſo worthy to be commended as you imagine, for he hath a long time been a traitor in your houſe. Then the Emperor ſaid—Tell me how? Guido ſaid—You have but one only daughter, which ſhall be your heir, and her Lodowick hath defiled through the aſſiſtance of Alexander; and he goeth to her every night as it pleaſeth him. As ſoon as the Emperor heard thereof, he was ſore moved, and Lodowick happened to paſs thro' the hall; and as the Emperor ſaw him, he ſaid—What hear I of thee, thou untrue body? If it be proved, thou ſhalt die the moſt ſhamefulleſt

fulleſt death that can be deviſed. Lodowick ſaid—My lord, what is the cauſe? Guido anſwered—I depoſed here before my lord, that thou haſt defiled his only daughter, and every night doſt fornication with her; and with battle I ſhall make it good upon thy body with my body. Then ſaid Lodowick—I am innocent, and falſly thou doſt belye me, and thereupon I hold the battle, and truſt to God thy falſehood ſhall come upon thine own head.

Then the Emperor aſſigned them the day of combat: that done, Lodowick went unto the lady, and ſhewed her the cauſe, and informed her of the day of battle, by the Emperor aſſigned, and in what manner Guido had accuſed him; and ſaid unto her—Now it behoveth me to have your counſel, or elſe I muſt die; for you know it would not avail me to have gain-ſaid the battle, without yielding myſelf guilty: Guido is hardy, that there is none like him but Alexander, and I am feeble: and therefore if I fight againſt him, I am but a dead man; and ſo you will have rebuke. Then ſaid ſhe, Follow my counſel, in that you miſtruſt yourſelf; go haſtily unto my father, and ſay, ye have received letters, whereby you are aſſured that the king your father is ſore ſick, and lieth upon his death bed, and he deſireth to ſpeak with you in perſon, and to diſpoſe of his kingdom before he departeth this life: ſo deſire him to give you leave, for the love of your father, to go and viſit him, and requeſt him to defer the day of battle, that in the

the mean ſeaſon you may go and come. When you have obtained permiſſion, as ſoon as poſſible ſecretly go to King Alexander, and take him apart, and ſhew him the cauſe of your coming, and deſire him in this extremity that he will aſſiſt to ſave us.

When Lodowick heard this counſel, it well pleaſed him, and he did according; and having obtained leave, with a reſpite of the day of battle, he departed towards Egypt, and tarried not till he came unto King Alexander's caſtle. When the king underſtood his coming, he was glad, and went to meet him, receiving him honourably, and wondered much at his ſudden appearance.

Then ſaid Lodowick--O my dear lord, and beſt-beloved friend, my life and death is in your hands; for as you ſaid before, that I ſhould have another fellow who would lie in wait to diſcover me and ſeek my deſtruction, without I looked more wiſely to myſelf. So long as I could I did abſtain from her; but afterwards, the king's ſon of Spain watched me till he perceived the truth: in the end, he accuſed me to the Emperor; and eight days from this I muſt be ready to fight with him body againſt body: and ye know he is a very hardy man, and I am weak and feeble: therefore hath Florentine counſelled me, that I ſhould not hide this matter from you; for ſhe knoweth you to be a faithful friend that would not deſert us in this neceſſity.

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Then ſaid Alexander---Is there any that knoweth of your coming unto me beſides Florentine? He anſwered him—No creature living; for I took leave of the Emperor, to go viſit my father being grievouſly ſick. Then Alexander aſked him—What counſel hath Florentine given you? and how might I help you? He ſaid--O my faithful friend, thus ſhe hath counſelled me:— Conſidering that we be like each other, you ſhould come and perform the battle, and no one would know you but ſhe, and the battle done, I would come again to the court, and you return unto your own country. Then he aſked him, when the battle was to be? and he ſaid—Eight days hence.

Then ſaid Alexander—If I but one day tarry before I depart, I cannot come by the day fixed; tell me how I muſt do? I have invited all my ſubjects to come to-morrow to my wedding; and if I go, then will the day be loſt;— if I go not to the battle, then Florentine and you are undone: What think you is beſt?— When Lodowick heard that, he fell to the earth, and began to ſorrow without ceaſing, ſaying—Sorrow comes ſuddenly to from all ſides! Then ſaid Alexander---Be of good cheer, for I will not forſake you, though I might loſe my life and kingdom: but hear what I have thought upon; ſeeing we are much alike, ſo that the one cannot be known from the other, and as for me I am not rightly known here, but my barons and other my ſubjects will take you for me; therefore you may

here

here abide, and marry my wife in my ſtead, and hold the feaſts and nuptials, and manage every thing as if myſelf were preſent; but when you come to bed with my wife, look you there be true and faithful, and I ſhall without tarrying take my horſe, and ride where the battle ſhall be; and if God give me victory, I will come again ſecretly, and you ſhall go again unto your beſt-beloved. This done, Alexander bade Lodowick farewel, and took his journey towards the Emperor's court, to fight the battle with Guido; and Lodowick tarried in Egypt inſtead of King Alxander.

Next morning came Lodowick, as though he had been King Alexander, aud ſolemnly, in the face of the church, he eſpouſed King Alexander's wife, and ſolemnized the marriage-feaſt with great royalty of delicacies and dainties, plenty of all wine, and divers inſtruments of muſick, with great joy and cheer, for the noblemen, and all others that were aſſembled. And when the night was come, he went to bed with the queen, and laid between him and her a naked ſword; whereat ſhe wondered, but ſaid nothing: and ſo he lay with her every night while King Alexander was gone.

Now Alexander, at the day prefixed, came unto the Emperor, and ſaid—O moſt ſovereign Lord, I have left my father very ſick, and in hazard of death; nevertheleſs I am come to perform my promiſe, with a full reſolution to defend my honour. The Emperor

ſaid—

ſaid—Ye do honourably, and according to the valour of a nobleman; and fortune ſhall favour you, I hope, in your righteous quarrel.

And when the Emperor's daughter underſtood that Alexander was come, ſhe ſent for him; and when he came to her, ſhe courteouſly embraced him, and with great joy kiſſed him, and bleſſed the time that ſhe ſaw him again, and demanded where he had left her love Lodowick? Then he declared unto her the whole circumſtances, and how he had left him king in his realm. So he took his leave of her, and went to Lodowick's chamber, no creature thinking but that he was Lodowick, except Florentine only. The next day, before Alexander went to the battle, he ſaid unto the Emperor, in the preſence of Guido—My moſt renowned ſovereign Lord, Guido hath falſely accuſed me unto your noble grace, in ſaying that I ſhould be ſo familiar with the princeſs your moſt virtuous and only daughter, to the great diſhonour of your noble perſon, and hers: I ſwear by the Holy Evangeliſt, that ſhe was never in any wiſe known by me, as he hath alledged unto you, which I ſhall make good upon his body with the aid and aſſiſtance of God.

Then anſwered Guido——Yet once I ſay again, and ſwear by the Holy Evangeliſts, and by all that God hath made, that thou haſt had knowledge of, and defiled the Emperor's daughter, and that I will make good upon thy head.

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Whereupon they leaped upon their courſers, and ran ſo fiercely at each other, with their ſpears, that they both broke and ſhivered in pieces: then they drew their ſwords, and fought ſo long, until at laſt Alexander with great might, at one ſtroke, ſmote off Guido's head, and ſent it unto the Emperor's daughter; whereof ſhe was glad, and bare it unto her father, and ſaid unto him—Behold the head of him that had ſo falſely defamed you and me.

When the Emperor perceived the victory, he ſent for Alexander, whom he thought to be Lodowick, and ſaid—O Lodowick, this day your honour and my daughter's, you have ſaved, you ſhall be to-morrow in my favour, and whoſoever ſhall again defame you, ſhall for ever ſtand in my indignation.

Then anſwered Alexander—God always aſſiſteth them that truſt in him, and revengeth wrong done to the innocent: but, moſt renowned Lord, one thing I entreat, that it will pleaſe you to give me leave to go and ſee how it ſtandeth with my father, whom I left ſore ſick, and if he be any thing amended, I ſhall incontinently return. Then the Emperor ſaid, That pleaſeth me; but you may in no wiſe leave me, for I cannot be without your preſence.

Alexander having taken leave of the Emperor, with all poſſible ſpeed he rode back unto his realm. Lodowick having heard of his return, with much joy met him, and received him friendly, ſaying—Moſt true friend of all

friends, tell me how fortune has favoured you in this your journey and buſineſs, and to what end have you brought it? Then he ſaid—Go to the Emperor and ſerve him as before, for I have gotten you more favour at his hands than you had before, and have alſo cut off the head of your greateſt enemy.

Then ſaid Lodowick—You have not only at this time ſaved my life, but preſerved me heretofore, which kindneſs I ſhall never forget, neither, as yet, can I requite; but God reward you: and ſo he departed to the Emperor's court, and there was no man that had any knowledge of the abſence of King Alexander, except Lodowick.

When night was come, he went to bed to the queen; and when he was laid, he began ſweetly to embrace her, and with friendly words he kiſſed her. Then ſaid ſhe,—You have made this time tedious, in that you have ſhewed nothing of friendſhip or love. How may this be? Then ſaid he—Wherefore ſay you that? She ſaid—Every night you have laid betwixt us a naked ſword, and have never turned towards me till now. And when he heard that, he thought on the truth of his fellow, and ſaid—O my dear lady! it was not done for any ill will, but for trial of love: but ſhe ſaid to herſelf—That love you ſhall have no more, but deſpite, and I will be revenged upon thee.

Then

Then there was a knight that ſhe had a little loved, and ſhe began to love him more and more, till at the laſt they ſought how they might deſtroy the king, and therefore they got poiſon and poiſoned him, ſo that if he had not been of ſtrong habit of body, he had died thereof; for it affected him ſo ſore, that it cauſed him to be a moſt foul and horrid leper, as ever was ſeen upon the earth. The Lords and Noblemen of the ſaid realm, and the Queen alſo, ſeeing this, deſpiſed him, and ſaid—It behoveth not a leper to reign over us, for he cannot beget any beautiful heirs: and ſo he was depoſed of his dignity royal, and driven out of his realm.

In the mean time died the Emperor of Rome, and Lodowick married his daughter; and after that Lodowick's father died; ſo that Lodowick reigned both Emperor of Rome and King of France.

When King Alexander heard of that, he bethought himſelf—Now my fellow reigneth, and ruleth both the empire of Rome and the realm of France, to whom can I go better than unto him, for whom I have often ventured already? and taking with him his ſtaff and clapper, he went towards the Emperor's dominions.

When he came near the gate, he ſat down among other poor lazers, expecting the giving of alms; and upon a ſudden, as the Emperor went out of the palace, all the lazers began to ring their clappers, and King Alexan-

der did as the other; but there was no alms given him: so he tarried until the Emperor was set and served at the table.

Then went King Alexander unto the gate, and knocked; and the porter asked who was there? Alexander answered him—I am a poor despised man, I pray you for the love of God turn your sight from my visage; but for the reward of God do my message unto the Emperor. He asked, what was the matter? Alexander said—Go and tell him here is a lazer right horrible ugly to see, which prayeth him, for the love of God and King Alexander, that he will grant him this day to eat his alms before him upon the earth in his hall. The porter answered—I wonder you dare desire that of my lord, for all the hall is full of lords and noblemen, and if they should behold you, they would abhor their meat; but forasmuch as you have required it of me solemnly for the love of God, I shall do your errand, let what may happen: and so he went and did his message to the Emperor. When the Emperor heard the porter name Alexander King of Egypt, he said to him—Go thy ways and bring him before me, how horrible and ugly soever he may be, and place him before me, that he may eat in my presence.

The porter brought him immediately, and ordained him a place, and set him to meat before the Emperor; and when he had well refreshed himself, he said unto one of the Emperor's servants—My dear friend, do me this errand

errand unto the Emperor; ſay unto him—that I pray him for the love of God and King Alexander, that he will ſend me his cup full of wine. The ſervant ſaid—For the love of God I will do it, but I believe it will not be; for if you ſhould but touch my lord's cup he will by no means drink of the ſame again. Nevertheleſs he did the errand.

And when the Emperor heard him name King Alexander, he commanded his cup to be filled with the beſt wine, and carried to him, which wine when he had received, he put into his bottle, and took the ring that Lodowick

had given him, and put it into the cup, and ſent it again unto the Emperor.

When the Emperor ſaw the ring, he inſtantly knew that it was the ſame he had given unto King Alexander in friendſhip, when he departed from him, and thought in his heart he was dead, or elſe that this man very ſtrangely came by the ring, and commanded preſently, that the lazer ſhould not depart till he had ſpoken with him; for in no wiſe could he have any knowledge of him, nor yet repute him for Alexander.

When dinner was done, the Emperor called the ſick man apart, and aſked him how he came by that ring? King Alexander demanded if he knew the ring? The Emperor ſaid—I remember it well. The King ſaid—Wot you likewiſe to whom you gave it? The Emperor ſaid—Yea, right well. Then ſaid Alexander—How is it that you know not me? for I am the perſon unto whom you gave it. When the Emperor heard that, he fell to the earth with grief, and tore his garment, with many ſighings and bewailings, and ſaid—O Alexander! you are the entire half of my ſoul. How is your clean and delicate body become ſo infected, that was very fair and pleaſant? He anſwered—This has happened unto me for the great fidelity you have ſhewed unto me in the bed with my wife, when you laid a naked ſword betwixt you and her; whereby ſhe became angry and hated me, and ſhe and a knight that in former time ſhe had loved, have poiſoned me in this manner, and driven me from my realm.

When

When the Emperor heard that, he took him about the neck and kiſſed him, and ſaid—O my moſt dear and entirely beloved brother! I grieve to ſee you in this great perplexity. I would to God I might die for you! But, my moſt dear friend, ſuffer patiently a little time, till we have ſent for all the Wiſe Maſters in phyſic, to have their advice, if there be any remedy to be had, or hope of recovery of your health; and if it be poſſible to help you, we ſhall neither ſpare lordſhip, empire, or any goods temporal, to make you whole and perfect.

In the mean time, he was carried into a fair chamber, richly furniſhed with every thing requiſite for his eaſe and health. Then in haſte he ſent meſſengers to every part of the empire, for the moſt expert phyſicians that might be found, and within a month after were aſſembled in preſence of the Emperor, thirty that were exceeding ſkilful in that ſcience; to which the Emperor ſaid——My well-beloved Maſters, I have a friend that is grievouſly afflicted with a foul leproſy, and I wiſh much that he was healed, and made as perfect as he was before, ſparing neither gold, ſilver, or any expence whatever, that he might eſtabliſh his health again. Then anſwered the Maſters—This is poſſible to be done by phyſic, which you ſhall underſtand after we have ſeen the perſon: and when they ſaw him they knew the cauſe of his infirmity, and ſaid it was incurable for all phyſicians living.

The Emperor hearing that, was right ſorry, and committed him to the Almighty God, calling unto him moſt of the religious men that dwelt near the court; and a number of poor people, beſides many devout perſons, deſiring them earneſtly to make prayers unto the Almighty, that he would be pleaſed of his infinite goodneſs, to make perfect his deareſt friend King Alexander: and he himſelf, with many others, faſted and prayed to the Almighty, for the ſpeedy recovery of his friend.

Upon a time, as King Alexander was at his prayers, there came unto him a voice from heaven, ſaying—Tell Lodowick the Emperor, that if he, with his own hands, will ſlay thoſe two children which his Empreſs had at a birth, and with the blood of them waſh and bathe thy body, thy fleſh ſhall become as fair and as clear as the bodies of theſe little children; if not, thou muſt never look to be cured whilſt breath is in thy body, and ſo farewel.

Now when King Alexander had heard this ſtrange voice, he began to think within himſelf what it was, and whence it came. Then he replied unto himſelf--This viſion is not to be ſhewed; for it is contrary to human nature, that any man ſhould ſlay his children for the recovery of a ſtranger.

The Emperor continued day and night in prayer with fervent devotion, earneſtly begging to God for King Alexander, never ceaſing, until a voice came to him, and ſaid—How long will you thus call and cry unto me?

when

when it was openly ſhewed unto King Alexander by what means he might recover his health, and his body become clear without ſpot or blemiſh.

The Emperor hearing that voice, he went to King Alexander, and ſaid unto him—Of all friends the beſt and moſt true, bleſſed be the moſt high and everlaſting God, who never faileth them that put their truſt in him, of whom I have knowledge that it is ſhewed unto you how you may be recovered of your leproſy: wherefore I entreat you that you will plainly lay open unto me how it may be done, for the reſtoring of your former health, that we may have joy together; and if you need any thing that may do you good, I will fulfil it all in my power; yea, and for your health give all that I have.

Alexander ſaid—Sir, I dare not ſhew you how I may be cured of my leproſy, for it exceedeth, and it is a thing againſt nature, therefore I will not as yet ſhew it you, howbeit I have a great truſt and confidence in you.

The Emperor ſaid——Alexander put your truſt in me yet; whatſoever is poſſible to be done for recovering your health, I will do it; and therefore conceal nothing from me, I pray you.

Then ſaid Alexander—I have of God knowledge, that if you will ſlay your two ſons with thine own hands, and waſh me in their blood, I ſhall be whole, therefore I have not ſhewed it unto you; for methinks it is againſt nature,

that the father ſhould ſlay his own children for the health of a ſtranger. The Emperor ſaid—Say not that you are a ſtranger, for I love you as myſelf, and therefore if I had ten children, I ſhould not ſpare one for your health.

Afterwards the Emperor eſpied his time when the Empreſs was out of the way, and went into the chamber where the children ſlept and drew his knife, and cut both their throats; and gathered the blood into a veſſel, and then bathed Alexander therewith: and when he was waſhed, his body was as fair and clean as if it had been a young child. Then the Emperor had a perfect knowledge of his viſage, and kiſſed him, ſaying—O good Alexander! now I ſee you in the ſame form I have oftentimes delighted in.

Bleſſed be God, that ever I had theſe children, by whom your health is reſtored, and thy body made pure and clean. As yet none had knowledge of the death of theſe children, ſave the Emperor and Alexander.

When the Emperor ſaw that King Alexander was perfectly healed, he ſaid unto him—I will ordain you an honourable company, and you ſhall go hence about five miles; and the next day ſend me a meſſenger, and let me know the day of your return. I ſhall then with great ſolemnity come and meet you, and you ſhall remain with me until I may conveniently provide for the recovery of your realm.

This

This counſel pleaſed King Alexander well, and was performed; for on the next day following there came a meſſenger to the Emperor, certifying him of the return of King Alexander.

When the Empreſs heard theſe tidings, ſhe rejoiced, and ſaid to the Emperor—O my beſt beloved lord, have you not juſt cauſe to rejoice, ſeeing Alexander King of Egypt is now coming to viſit you, whom of long time you have not ſeen. If you pleaſe to go and meet him with your lords and gentlemen, I ſhall follow with my ladies and gentlewomen: and as yet ſhe knew not of the death of her two children.

Then rode the Emperor and Empreſs with a great company of lords and ladies to meet with the good king; and when they met, with great reverence they received him, and with great joy brought him unto the palace; and at the time of dinner, he was placed between the Emperor and Empreſs, and all the mirth and chear that ſhe could make, ſhe gladly ſhewed him.

When the Emperor ſaw that, he was glad, and exceedingly well pleaſed, and ſaid—O my dear Florentine, it pleaſes me greatly indeed, that you make unto King *Alexander* ſo good chear. Then anſwered the Empreſs—Why might I not? Is not his company unto us better than gold and ſilver? But unto you, my renowned lord, much more; for by his means you attained unto ſuch great dignity,

and by him many times you have been ſaved from death. The Emperor anſwered—Then I pray you, dearly beloved Florentine, heed my words: ſaw you not that deformed lazer which yeſterday ſat at our table, and prayed me for the love of God and King Alexander, that I would give him drink? She ſaid—My honourable Lord, I ſaw him well; a more horrible man I never beheld. Then ſaid the Emperor—I demand of you; put the caſe he were King Alexander, and that he could not be made whole but with the blood of your two children, which you had at a birth, would you that they ſhould be ſlain that he might bathe himſelf in their blood, and by that means have perfect health and comely appearance, as you now ſee him have? She anſwered—My renowned lord and huſband, wherefore aſk you that queſtion? I tell you of a truth, that had I ten ſons I gladly would ſlay them with my own hands to prepare for him a bathe, and waſh him therein myſelf, rather than let him remain in ſuch a wretched and miſerable caſe, ſo diſagreeable to the ſight, and in ſuch danger of his health withal: God might ſend us more children, but ſuch a friend were a thing impoſſible ever hereafter to find in all the kingdom.

When the Emperor heard this, he was well pleaſed, and ſaid—O my loving Empreſs, had you rather have your children dead, than the King of Egypt ſhould languiſh in his afflictions? Then I will ſhew you the real truth

of

of the matter. That foul lazer which you ſaw was Alexander, that ſitteth here by us, and is made whole with the blood of our two ſons, and they are dead.

The Empreſs hearing that, began to be exceedingly ſorrowful, and cry bitterly, as was very natural, notwithſtanding ſhe had ſaid before, ſhe had rather ſee her children dead, than Alexander ſhould remain in ſuch a miſerable condition.

The nouriſhers of the children underſtanding that, preſently, with great crying, ran to the nurſery; and great bewailing was made through the Emperor's court, for his two ſons, and when the nouriſhers came to the chamber, they found the children playing, and ſinging a ſong of praiſe and thankſgiving, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, for reſtoring their lives. Then they returned with all haſte unto the Emperor and Empreſs, and ſhewed them how the children were living, and that about their throats where they were cut, they had circles of gold: whereof were great joy and gladneſs in all the court, with thankſgiving to God for that exceeding great miracle and wonderful work.

Now the Emperor with a great multitude aſſembled together, and went with King Alexander into Egypt, and ſet him again in poſſeſſion of his realm. The queen and the knight, who had lived long together in adultery, he cauſed to be ſlain: and when this was done, the

the Emperor had one only ſiſter, whom he married unto King Alexander.

When King Alexander had obtained all his realm again, and was ſet in reſt and peace, the Emperor returned unto his empire, and King Alexander ſo wiſely and politickly governed himſelf in all his affairs, that he overcame his rebellious enemies.

And when he was ſeated in his glory, peace, and might, he thought upon his father and mother, by whom he was caſt into the ſea, who dwelled in far parts, and ſent a meſſenger to let them know that the King of Egypt upon ſuch a day would be with them, to view thoſe parts of the country, and to ſport himſelf, and to make a royal feaſt. When the meſſenger arrived there, they received him with honour, bountiful entertainments, and precious gifts; and ſent him back, ſaying—that their ſervices ſhould be ready at all times to do the king's pleaſure; but that they could not poſſibly diſcern that he ſhould vouchſafe them that honour, whereof they were not worthy, as to viſit them in thoſe parts, to ſport himſelf there a while.

The meſſenger returned, and ſhewed the king how willingly they would receive him, and in what manner they did reward him, and how faithful they were and ready to do him ſervice, wherewith the king was exceedingly pleaſed. When the day fixed was come, the king with a fair company rode towards his father's

ther's houſe, who was to his father and mother unknown.

When the king came near his father's caſtle, the knight rode joyfully to meet him, and as he came nigh to the king, he alighted, and did him reverence upon his knees: but the king took him up preſently, and commanded him to take horſe again, and ſo they rode together unto the caſtle.

And when they were come thither, the woman came unto him, and fell upon her knees, and welcomed him gladly; and the king took her up as lovingly and kiſſed her. She ſaid

unto him—My Lord, you do us, unworthy, this honour with the preſence of your moſt honourable perſonage, which we ſhall never be able to deſerve.

After

After the meat was all ready, and the time of day was come to go to dinner, the father came with a bason and ewer, and the mother with a towel, saying—Sir, all things are ready; pleaseth it you to wash? and when the king saw that, he smiled, and said to himself—Now is the song of the nightingale true, that my father and mother should gladly do as I have said, if myself would thereunto consent: but he would not suffer them to do him any such service, saying—Your age is to be honoured; and therefore I will have none of it. Then he called one of his servants, whom he commanded to do that service. The knight said—You will not suffer us to do it for our honour, because we are not worthy thereof. The king said—Have I not said, that for your age I forbear you? When the king was seated at the table, he set his mother on the right-hand of him, and his father on the left; and then, as much as they might or durst, did behold his favour and countenance.

Dinner being over, the king retired into a fair chamber, and made the knight with his lady follow him, and commanded all others to be absent.

When they were alone, the king said—Have you no children? They answered—We have neither son nor daughter. Then the king said—Had you never any? The knight answered—We had one son, but he is long ago dead.

dead. The king aſked of what death he died? and the knight ſaid—Of a natural one. Then the king ſaid—If I find it otherwiſe, you are found in a moſt horrid fault. Then aſked the knight—My moſt honourable and renowned Lord, wherefore enquire you ſo earneſtly after our ſon? The king anſwered—Not without juſt cauſe; and therefore I muſt and will know of what death he died: if you will not tell me I ſhall cauſe you both to ſuffer moſt ſhameful deaths.

When they heard that, they fell upon the ground on their knees before him, and aſked his pardon and forgiveneſs: but the king ſuffered them not to kneel, and took them up, ſaying—To that intent I came not unto your houſe, to eat your bread and to betray you. But ſay to me the very truth, and you ſhall be pardoned; for it is given me to underſtand that you have put him to death; and if that be made to appear againſt you, judgment will enſue, and you muſt die a moſt ſhameful death. Then ſaid the knight—My moſt honourable Lord, ſave my life, and I will ſhew you the very truth. The king ſaid—Fear not, for I ſhall do you no harm.

Then anſwered the knight, and ſaid—Moſt dread ſovereign Lord, we had a ſon that was wiſe, learned, and intelligent; and upon a day as he ſtood before us, and ſerved at the table, there came to the window a nightingale, that

ſung

ſung exceeding ſweetly, whoſe ſong he began to interpret, and to tell us what it meant, and ſaid—This bird ſingeth, that I ſhall become ſo great and mighty a lord, that you, my father, ſhall be glad to hold a baſon with water to waſh my hands, and my mother a towel, if I will ſuffer it.

And when I heard that, I was ſore moved, and vexed in my mind; and ſo I took him upon my ſhoulder, and caſt him into the ſea that he might be drowned. Then ſaid the king—What evil had come to you, if he had been made ſo great! Methinks it would have been for your honour and profit. The knight ſaid, My renowned Lord, it was for no reaſon, but madneſs. The king anſwered—It was a great folly in you that you ſhould act againſt the ordinance of God. Now you ſhall know for a truth, I am your ſon that you caſt into the ſea, and God of his great mercy hath ſaved me, and by his grace brought me to this eſtate and dignity.

The father and mother hearing that, with fear and joy amazed, fell flat unto the ground, whom he lovingly took up, ſaying—Fear not, but rather rejoice, for you ſhall ſuffer no harm but my exaltation ſhall be to your glory and profit: and ſo he kiſſed his father and mother with great joy. Then began the mother to weep greatly; and the king ſaid to her—Leave off your ſorrowing, and be of good chear,

for

for in my realm you ſhall be honoured above me, during my life. And he took them with him into his kingdom, where they dwelled a long time in honour and joy, and ended their days with comfort and love of all the people.

Here

Here follows the Application of the Example to the Purpose.

THEN said Diocleſian, the Emperor's ſon—Lord, have you underſtood what I have ſaid? The Emperor anſwered—Right well. Then ſaid the ſon—My moſt honoured and renowned father, although that God hath given and endued me with wiſdom and underſtanding above others, that ſhall not be an impairing of your honour and might, but more for the preſervation and maintenance of the ſame: ſo in like manner, the king's moſt excellent majeſty, which was nothing to the hindrance of the father; but this rather for his worſhip, profit and greater comfort: for as long as they lived, it was in very great joy and mirth that they were loved of the people, and honoured of the kingdom. Then ſaid the Emperor—My beloved ſon, I will wholly reſign all the empire unto you, to govern and rule, for I perceive well by your narration that you have to me declared, that it is beſt for me, and moſt for my eaſe, now to leave this worldly and tedious buſineſs, and the labour and care of a king, and betake me to my reſt and eaſe, for I am old and feeble. Then anſwered the ſon, and ſaid unto his father—My moſt honourable Lord and father, ſo ſhall it be; but as long as you live, you ſhall have the authority and government of the empire at your com-

command, as it appertaineth unto an Emperor; but in all the buſineſſes that are laborious and troubleſome, I will always be ready to adminiſter any ſervice that lays in my power, according to my bounden duty.

How

How Judgment was given againſt the Empreſs, *and how that ſhe with her Lover were put to Death.*

THEN the Emperor commanded the judges and juſtices to ſit in judgment, and to bring again the Empreſs before them, with the ladies, and alſo the ribauld, her beſt beloved, cloathed in the veſture and habit of a woman, whom he cauſed to ſtand next unto the Empreſs. Then the Emperor's ſon aſked ſentence and juſt judgment upon them; ſaying—My moſt honourable Lord and father, even as you are Emperor of the world, and that your majeſty and power requireth to do true juſtice unto all your ſubjects that deſire it; ſo now I demand, that you this day do give right ſentence and true judgment upon the untruth, falſhood, and ſhame, which were put and alledged unto me by the Empreſs; for the which accuſations I have been often led unto the gallows, and have ſtood in great jeopardy and peril of my life, and alſo that ſhe hath been to you untrue of her body, as you have ſeen by good proof made before you; and on the which I aſk judgment: and therefore command your juſtices and judges to give ſentence thereupon according to right, equity, and law.

When the Empreſs heard this, ſhe fell flat to the earth before the Emperor, and aſked mercy and

and forgiveneſs for her juſt offence and miſconduct; but it availed nothing, for the ſon inſiſted on juſtice and judgment. Then ſpake the judges—Her own miſdeeds condemn her, and the report of her leman by her kept and found; therefore, we give ſentence againſt the Empreſs—That ſhe ſhall be bound to a horſe's tail, and drawn through the ſtreets of the city to the place of execution, and there be burnt. We alſo judge and give ſentence againſt the ribauld—That he ſhall be quartered and ſmitten in pieces, and his fleſh caſt to the hounds, and birds of the air, to devour him: and this ſentence was approbated and allowed by all the people.

Hereafter, in ſhort time, died the Emperor, and his ſon Dioclesian governed and ruled the empire with great wiſdom, and always held and kept his Maſters with him in great honour and glory. By whoſe counſel and wiſdom he governed the empire, and excelled all his predeceſſors in riches, and doing right and juſtice, and his Maſters ſo loved him above all others, that many times they put themſelves in great peril and jeopardy of their lives for him: and ſo ended their days with joy and honour, to the praiſe of Almighty God.

FINIS.